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TO THE
WORKS
OF THE
ENGLISH POETS.

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.

VOLUME THE SIXTH.

LONDON:

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FOR C. BATHURST, J. BUCKLAND, W. STRAHAN, J. RIVINGTON AND SONS, T. DAVIES, T. PAYNE, L. DAVIS, W. OWEN, B. WHITE, S. CROWDER, T. CASLON, T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, C. DILLY, J. DODSLEY, J. WILKIE, J. ROBSON, J. JOHNSON, T. LOWNDES, G. ROBINSON, T. CADELL, J. NICHOLS, E. NEWBERY, T. EVANS, J. RIDLEY, R. BALDWIN, C. NICOL, LEIGH AND SOTHEBY, J. BEW, N. CONANT, J. MURRAY, W. FOX, J. BOWEN.

M DCC LXXXI.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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PREFACES

TO

GRANVILLE,

ROWE, TICKELL,

CONGREVE, FENTON,

AND

PRIOR.

BRITISH MUSEUM

GRANVILLE.

OF GEORGE GRANVILLE, or as others write *Greenville*, or *Grenville*, afterwards lord Landſdown of Biddeford in the county of Devon, leſs is known than his name and rank might give reaſon to expect. He was born about 1667, the ſon of Bernard Greenville, who was entruſted by Monk with the moſt private tranſactions of the Reſtoration, and the grandſon of Sir Bevil Greenville, who died in the King's cauſe, at the battle of Landſdowne.

His early education was ſuperintended by Sir William Ellis; and his progreſs was ſuch, that before the age of twelve he was ſent to Cambridge, where he pronounced a copy of his own verſes to the princeſs Mary d'Eſté of Modena, then dutcheſs of York, when ſhe viſited the univerſity.

At the acceſſion of king James, being now at eighteen, he again exerted his poetical powers, and addreſſed the new monarch in three ſhort pieces, of which the firſt is profane, and the two others ſuch as a boy might be expected to produce; but he was commended by old Waller, who perhaps was pleaſed to find himſelf imitated, in ſix lines, which, though they begin with nonſenſe and

end with dulneſs, excited in the young author a rapture of acknowledgement, *in numbers ſuch as* Waller's *ſelf might uſe.*

It was probably about this time that he wrote the poem to the earl of Peterborough, upon his *accompliſhment* of the duke of York's marriage with the princeſs of Modena, whoſe charms appear to have gained a ſtrong prevalence over his imagination, and upon whom nothing ever has been charged but imprudent piety, an intemperate and miſguided zeal for the propagation of popery.

However faithful Granville might have been to the King, or however enamoured of the Queen, he has left no reaſon for ſuppoſing that he approved either the artifices or the violence with

which the King's religion was insinuated or obtruded. He endeavoured to be true at once to the King and to the Church.

Of this regulated loyalty he has transmitted to posterity a sufficient proof, in the letter which he wrote to his father about a month before the prince of Orange landed.

" Mar, near Doncaster, Oct. 6, 1688.

" To the honourable Mr. Barnard Gran-
" ville, at the earl of Bathe's, St.
" James's.

" SIR,

" Your having no prospect of obtain-
" ing a commission for me, can no way
" alter or cool my desire at this impor-
" tant

"tant juncture to venture my life, in "ſome manner or other, for my King "and my Country.

"I cannot bear living under the re- "proach of lying obſcure and idle in "a country retirement, when every man "who has the leaſt ſenſe of honour "ſhould be preparing for the field.

"You may remember, Sir, with what "reluctance I ſubmitted to your com- "mands upon Monmouth's rebellion, "when no importunity could prevail "with you to permit me to leave the "Academy: I was too young to be "hazarded; but, give me leave to ſay, "it is glorious at any age to die for "one's country, and the ſooner the "nobler the ſacrifice.

"I am now older by three years. My "uncle Bathe was not ſo old when he "was left among the ſlain at the battle "of Newbury; nor you yourſelf, Sir, "when you made your eſcape from your "tutor's, to join your brother at the "defence of Scilly.

"The ſame cauſe is now come round "about again. The King has been "miſled; let thoſe who have miſled "him be anſwerable for it. Nobody "can deny but he is ſacred in his own "perſon, and it is every honeſt man's "duty to defend it.

"You are pleaſed to ſay, it is yet "doubtful if the Hollanders are raſh "enough to make ſuch an attempt; "but, be that as it will, I beg leave to

"inſiſt

"insist upon it, that I may be presented "to his majesty, as one whose utmost "ambition it is to devote his life to his "service, and my country's, after the "example of all my ancestors.

"The gentry assembled at York, to "agree upon the choice of representa- "tives for the country, have prepared "an address, to assure his majesty they "are ready to sacrifice their lives and "fortunes for him upon this and all "other occasions; but at the same time "they humbly beseech him to give "them such magistrates as may be "agreeable to the laws of the land; "for, at present, there is no authority "to which they can legally submit.

"They have been beating up for "voluntiers at York, and the towns ad- "jacent, to ſupply the regiments at "Hull; but nobody will liſt.

"By what I can hear, every body "wiſhes well to the King; but they "would be glad his miniſters were "hanged.

"The winds continue ſo contrary, "that no landing can be ſo ſoon as was "apprehended; therefore I may hope, "with your leave and aſſiſtance, to be "in readineſs before any action can "begin. I beſeech you, Sir, moſt hum- "bly and moſt earneſtly, to add this "one act of indulgence more to ſo "many other teſtimonies which I have "conſtantly received of your goodneſs;

"and

"and be pleaſed to believe me always,
"with the utmoſt duty and ſubmiſ-
"ſion, Sir,

"Your moſt dutiful ſon,

"And moſt obedient ſervant,

"GEO. GRANVILLE."

Through the whole reign of king William he is ſuppoſed to have lived in literary retirement, and indeed had for ſome time few other pleaſures but thoſe of ſtudy in his power. He was, as the biographers obſerve, the younger ſon of a younger brother; a denomination by which our anceſtors proverbially expreſſed the loweſt ſtate of penury and dependance. He is ſaid, however, to have preſerved himſelf at this time from diſgrace

disgrace and difficulties by œconomy, which he forgot or neglected in life more advanced, and in better fortune.

About this time he became enamoured of the countess of Newburgh, whom he has celebrated with so much ardour by the name of Mira. He wrote verses to her before he was three and twenty, and may be forgiven if he regarded the face more than the mind. Poets are sometimes in too much haste to praise.

In the time of his retirement it is probable that he composed his dramatick pieces, the *She-Gallants* (acted 1696), which he revised, and called *Once a Lover and always a Lover*; *The Jew of Venice*, altered from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1701); *Heroick Love*, a tragedy (1698);

(1698); *The Britiſh Enchanters* (1706), a dramatick poem; and *Peleus and Thetis*, a maſque, written to accompany *The Jew of Venice*.

The comedies, which he has not printed in his own edition of his works, I never ſaw; *Once a Lover and always a Lover*, is ſaid to be in a great degree indecent and groſs. Granville could not admire without bigotry; he copied the wrong as well as the right from his maſters, and may be ſuppoſed to have learned obſcenity from Wycherly as he learned mythology from Waller.

In his *Jew of Venice*, as Rowe remarks, the character of *Shilock* is made comick, and we are prompted to laughter inſtead of deteſtation.

It is evident that *Heroick Love* was written, and preſented on the ſtage, before the death of Dryden. It is a mythological tragedy, upon the love of Agamemnon and Chryſeis, and therefore eaſily ſunk into neglect, though praiſed in verſe by Dryden, and in proſe by Pope.

It is concluded by the wiſe Ulyſſes with this ſpeech:

Fate holds the ſtrings, and men like children move
But as they're led; ſucceſs is from above.

In this collection are only *Peleus and Thetis*, and the *Britiſh Enchanters*, of which finding that the compilers had im-

improperly omitted the Preface, I have directed it to be added.

At the acceſſion of queen Anne, having his fortune improved by bequeſts from his father, and his uncle the earl of Bathe, he was choſen into parliament for Fowey. He ſoon after engaged in a joint tranſlation of the *Invectives againſt Philip*, with a deſign, ſurely weak and puerile, of turning the thunder of Demoſthenes upon the head of Lewis.

He afterwards (in 1706) had his eſtate again augmented by an inheritance from his elder brother, Sir Bevil Granville, who, as he returned from the government of Barbadoes, died at ſea. He continued to ſerve in parliament; and in the ninth year of queen Anne was choſen

choſen knight of the ſhire for Cornwall.

At the memorable change of the miniſtry (1710), he was made ſecretary at war, in the place of Mr. Robert Walpole.

Next year, when the violence of party made twelve peers in a day, Mr. Granville became *Lord Lanſdown Baron Biddeford*, by a promotion juſtly remarked to be not invidious, becauſe he was the heir of a family in which two peerages, that of the earl of Bathe and lord Granville of Potheridge, had lately become extinct. Being now high in the Queen's favour, he (1712) was appointed comptroller of the houſehold, and a privy counſellor; and to his

his other honours was added the dedication of Pope's *Windſor Foreſt*. He was advanced next year to be treaſurer of the houſehold.

Of theſe favours he ſoon loſt all but his title; for at the acceſſion of king George his place was given to the earl Cholmondeley, and he was perſecuted with the reſt of his party. Having proteſted againſt the bill for attainting Ormond and Bolingbroke, he was, after the inſurrection in Scotland, ſeized Sept. 26, 1715, as a ſuſpected man, and confined in the Tower till Feb. 8, 1717, when he was at laſt releaſed, and reſtored to his ſeat in parliament; where (1719) he made a very ardent and animated ſpeech againſt the repeal of the bill to pre-

prevent Occaſional Conformity, which however, though it was then printed, he has not inſerted into his works.

Some time afterwards (about 1722), being perhaps embarraſſed by his profuſion, he went into foreign countries, with the uſual pretence of recovering his health. In this ſtate of leiſure and retirement, he received the firſt volume of Burnet's Hiſtory, of which he cannot be ſuppoſed to have approved the general tendency, and where he thought himſelf able to detect ſome particular falſehoods. He therefore undertook the vindication of general Monk from ſome calumnies of Dr. Burnet, and ſome miſrepreſentations of Mr. Echard. This was anſwered civilly by Mr. Thomas Burnet,

Burnet and Oldmixon, and more roughly by Dr. Colbatch.

His other hiſtorical performance is a defence of his relation Sir Richard Greenville, whom lord Clarendon has ſhewn in a form very unamiable. So much is urged in this apology, to juſtify many actions that have been repreſented as culpable, and to palliate the reſt, that the reader is reconciled for the greater part; and it is made very probable that Clarendon was by perſonal enmity diſpoſed to think the worſt of Greenville, as Greenville was alſo very willing to think the worſt of Clarendon. Theſe pieces were publiſhed at his return to England.

Being now desirous to conclude his labours, and enjoy his reputation, he published (1732) a very beautiful and splendid edition of his works, in which he omitted what he disapproved, and enlarged what seemed deficient. Wycherley's character is, I find, printed in these volumes from some former edition, and wants all that was afterwards added.

He now went to Court, and was kindly received by queen Caroline; to whom and to the princess Anne he presented his works, with verses on the blank leaves, with which he concluded his poetical labours.

He died in Hanover-square, Jan. 30, 1735, having a few days before buried his wife, the lady Anne Villiers, widow

to Mr. Thynne, by whom he had four daughters, but no ſon.

Writers commonly derive their reputation from their works; but there are works which owe their reputation to the character of the writer. The publick ſometimes has its favourites, whom it rewards for one ſpecies of excellence with the honours due to another. From him whom we reverence for his beneficence we do not willingly withhold the praiſe of genius; a man of exalted merit becomes at once an accompliſhed writer, as a beauty finds no great difficulty in paſſing for a wit.

Granville was a man illuſtrious by his birth, and therefore attracted notice: ſince he is by Pope ſtiled *the polite*, he

muſt be ſuppoſed elegant in his manners, and generally loved: he was in times of conteſt and turbulence ſteady to his party, and obtained that eſteem which is always conferred upon firmneſs and conſiſtency. With thoſe advantages, having learned the art of verſifying, he declared himſelf a poet; and his claim to the laurel was allowed.

But by a critick of a later generation, who takes up his book without any favourable prejudices, the praiſe already received will be thought ſufficient; for his works do not ſhew him to have had much comprehenſion from nature, or illumination from learning. He ſeems to have had no ambition above the imitation of Waller, of whom he has copied

pied the faults, and very little more. He is for ever amuſing himſelf with the puerilities of mythology; his King is Jupiter, who, if the Queen brings no children, has a barren Juno. The Queen is compounded of Juno, Venus, and Minerva. His poem on the dutcheſs of Grafton's law-ſuit, after having rattled awhile with Juno and Pallas, Mars and Alcides, Caſſiope, Niobe, and the Propetides, Hercules, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, at laſt concludes its folly with profaneneſs.

His verſes to Mira, which are moſt frequently mentioned, have little in them of either art or nature, of the ſentiments of a lover, or the language of a poet: there may be found, now-and-then, a

happier effort; but they are commonly feeble and unaffecting, or forced and extravagant.

His little pieces are ſeldom either ſpritely or elegant, either keen or weighty. They are trifles written by idleneſs, and publiſhed by vanity. But his Prologues and Epilogues have a juſt claim to praiſe.

The *Progreſs of Beauty* ſeems one of his moſt elaborate pieces, and is not deficient in ſplendor and gaiety; but the merit of original thought is wanting. Its higheſt praiſe is the ſpirit with which he celebrates king James's conſort, when ſhe was a queen no longer.

The *Eſſay on unnatural Flights in Poetry* is not inelegant nor injudicious, and has ſome-

ſomething of vigour beyond moſt of his other performances: his precepts are juſt, and his cautions proper; they are indeed not new, but in a didactick poem novelty is to be expected only in the ornaments and illuſtrations. His poetical precepts are accompanied with agreeable and inſtructive notes, which ought not to have been omitted in this edition.

The Maſque of *Peleus and Thetis* has here and there a pretty line; but it is not always melodious, and the concluſion is wretched.

In his *Britiſh Enchanters* he has bidden defiance to all chronology, by confounding the inconſiſtent manners of different ages; but the dialogue has often the air of Dryden's rhyming plays; and the

ſongs are lively, though not very correct. This is, I think, far the beſt of his works; for, if it has many faults, it has likewiſe paſſages which are at leaſt pretty, though they do not riſe to any high degree of excellence.

PREFACE TO THE BRITISH ENCHANTERS.

OF all publick ſpectacles, that which ſhould properly be called an Opera is calculated to give the higheſt delight. There is hardly any art but what is required to furniſh towards the entertainment; and there is ſomething or other to be provided that may touch every ſenſe, and pleaſe every palate.

The poet has a twofold taſk upon his hands in the dramatic and the lyric: the architect, the painter, the ompoſer, the actor, the finger, the dancer, &c. have each of them their ſeveral employments in the preparation, and in the execution.

The ſame materials indeed, in different hands, will have different ſucceſs; all depends upon a ſkilful mixture of the various ingredients. A bad artiſt will make but a mere hodge-podge with

with the ſame materials that one of a good taſte ſhall prepare an excellent olio.

The ſeaſoning muſt be ſenſe. Unleſs there is wherewithal to pleaſe the underſtanding, the eye and the ear will ſoon grow tired.

The French opera is perfect in the decorations, the dancing and magnificence; the Italian excels in the muſic and voices; but the drama falls ſhort in both.

An Engliſh ſtomach requires ſomething ſolid and ſubſtantial, and will riſe hungry from a regale of nothing but ſweemeats.

An opera is a kind of *ambigu:* the table is finely illuminated, adorned with flowers and fruits, and every thing that the ſeaſon affords fragrant or delightful to the eye or the odour; but unleſs there is ſomething too for the appetite, it is odds but the gueſts break up diſſatisfied.

It is incumbent upon the poet alone to provide for that in the choice of his fable, the conduct of his plot, the harmony of his numbers, the elevation of his ſentiments, and the juſtneſs of

of his characters. In this consists the solid and the substantial.

The nature of this entertainment requires the plot to be formed upon some story in which Enchanters and Magicians have a principal part. In our modern heroic poems they supply the place of the gods with the Ancients, and make a much more natural appearance by being mortals, with the difference only of being endowed with supernatural power.

The characters should be great and illustrious; the figure the actor makes upon the stage is one part of the ornament; by consequence the sentiments must be suitable to the characters in which love and honour will have the principal share.

The dialogue, which in the French and Italian is set to notes, and sung, I would have pronounced: if the numbers are of themselves harmonious, there will be no need of music to set them off: a good verse, well pronounced, is in itself musical; and speech is certainly more natural for discourse than singing.

Can

Can any thing be more prepoſterous than to behold Cato, Julius Cæſar, and Alexander the Great, ſtrutting upon the ſtage in the figure of ſongſters, perſonated by eunuchs?

The finging, therefore, ſhould be wholly applied to the lyrical part of the entertainment, which, by being freed from a tireſome, unnatural recitative, muſt certainly adminiſter more reaſonable pleaſure.

The ſeveral parts of the entertainment ſhould be ſo ſuited to relieve one another as to be tedious in none; and the connexion ſhould be ſuch, that not one ſhould be able to ſubſiſt without the other: like embroidery, ſo fixed and wrought into the ſubſtance, that no part of the ornament could be removed without tearing the ſtuff.

To introduce finging and dancing by head and ſhoulders, no way relative to the action, does not turn a play into an opera, though that title is now promiſcuouſly given to every farce ſprinkled here and there with a ſong and a dance.

The

The richeſt lace, ridiculouſly ſet on, will make but a fool's coat.

I will not take upon me to criticiſe what has appeared of this kind on the Engliſh ſtage: we have ſeveral poems under the name of Dramatic Operas by the beſt hands; but, in my opinion, the ſubjects, for the moſt part, have been improperly choſen. Mr. Addiſon's Roſamond, and Mr. Congreve's Semele, though excellent in their kind, are rather maſks than operas.

As I cannot help being concerned for the honour of my country, even in the minuteſt things, I am for endeavouring to outdo our neighbours in performances of all kinds.

Thus, if the ſplendour of the French opera, and the harmony of the Italian, were ſo ſkilfully interwoven with the charms of poetry, upon a regular dramatic bottom, as to inſtruct as well as delight, to improve the mind as well as raviſh the ſenſe, there can be no doubt but ſuch an addition would entitle our Engliſh opera to the preference of all others. The third part of the encouragement, of which we have been

ſo

ſo liberal to foreigners for a concert of muſic only, miſcalled an opera, would more than effect it.

In the conſtruction of the following Poem the author has endeavoured to ſet an example to his rules; precepts are beſt explained by examples; an abler hand might have executed it better: however, it may ſerve for a model to be improved upon, when we grow weary of ſcenes of low life, and return to a taſte of more generous pleaſures.

We are reproached by foreigners with ſuch unnatural irregularities in our dramatic pieces, as are ſhocking to all other nations; even a Swiſs has played the critic upon us, without conſidering they are as little approved by the judicious in our own. A ſtranger who is ignorant of the language, and incapable of judging of the ſentiments, condemns by the eye, and concludes what he hears to be as extravagant as what he ſees. When Oedipus breaks his neck out of a balcony, and Jocaſta appears in her bed murdering herſelf and her children, inſtead of moving

moving terror or compaſſion, ſuch ſpectacles only fill the ſpectator with horror: no wonder if ſtrangers are ſhocked at ſuch ſights, and conclude us a nation hardly yet civilized, that can ſeem to delight in them. To remove this reproach, it is much to be wiſhed our ſcenes were leſs bloody, and the ſword and dagger more out of faſhion. To make ſome amends for this excluſion, I would be leſs ſevere as to the rigour of ſome other laws enacted by the maſters, though it is always adviſable to keep as cloſe to them as poſſible: but reformations are not to be brought about all at once.

It may happen that the nature of certain ſubjects proper for moving the paſſions may require a little more latitude, and then, without offence to the critics, ſure there may be room for a ſaving in equity from the ſeverity of the common law of Parnaſſus as well as of the King's Bench. To ſacrifice a principal beauty, upon which the ſucceſs of the whole may depend, is being too ſtrictly tied down; in ſuch a caſe *ſummum jus* may be *ſumma injuria*.

Cor-

Corneille himſelf complains of finding his genius often cramped by his own rules: "There is "infinite difference," ſays he, "between ſpecu-"lation and practice: let the ſevereſt critic "make the trial, he will be convinced by his "own experience, that upon certain occaſions "too ſtrict an adherence to the letter of the "law ſhall exclude a bright opportunity of "ſhining, or touching the paſſions. Where the "breach is of little moment, or can be con-"trived to be as it were imperceptible in the "repreſentation, a gentle diſpenſation might be "allowed." To thoſe little freedoms he attributes the ſucceſs of his Cyd: but the rigid legiſlators of the Academy handled him ſo roughly for it, that he never durſt make the venture again, nor none who have followed him. Thus pinioned, the French Muſe muſt always flutter like a bird with the wings cut, incapable of a lofty flight.

The dialogue of their tragedies is under the ſame conſtraint as the conſtruction: not a diſcourſe, but an oration; not ſpeaking, but declaiming;

claiming; not free, natural, and eaſy, as converſation ſhould be, but preciſe, ſet, formal argumenting, *pro* and *con*, like diſputants in a ſchool. In writing, like dreſs, is it not poſſible to be too exact, too ſtarched, and too formal? Pleaſing negligence I have ſeen; who ever ſaw pleaſing formality?

In a word, all extremes are to be avoided. To be a French Puritan in the drama, or an Engliſh Latitudinarian, is taking different paths to be both out of the road. If the Britiſh Muſe is too unruly, the French is too tame: one wants a curb, the other a ſpur.

By pleading for ſome little relaxation from the utmoſt ſeverity of the rules, where the ſubject may ſeem to require it, I am not beſpeaking any ſuch indulgence for the preſent performance: though the Ancients have left us no pattern to follow of this ſpecies of tragedy, I perceive, upon examination, that I have been attentive to their ſtricteſt leſſons.

The unities are religiouſly obſerved; the place is the ſame, varied only into different proſpects by the power of enchantment; all the incidents fall naturally within the very time of repreſentation; the plot is one principal action, and of that kind which introduces variety of turns and changes, all tending to the ſame point; the ornaments and decorations are of a piece with it, ſo that one could not well ſubſiſt without the other; every act concludes with ſome unexpected revolution; and, in the end, vice is puniſhed, virtue rewarded, and the moral is inſtructive.

Rhyme, which I would by no means admit into the dialogue of graver tragedy, ſeems to me the moſt proper ſtyle for repreſentations of this heroic romantic kind, and beſt adapted to accompany muſic. The ſolemn language of a haughty tyrant will by no means become a paſſionate lover, and tender ſentiments require the ſofteſt colouring.

The

The theme must govern the style; every thought, every character, every subject of a different nature, must speak a different language. An humble lover's gentle address to his mistress would rumble strangely in the Miltonic dialect; and the soft harmony of Mr. Waller's numbers would as ill become the mouths of Lucifer and Belzebub. The terrible and the tender must be set to different notes of music.

To conclude. This dramatic attempt was the first essay of a very infant Muse, rather as a task at such hours as were free from other exercises, than any way meant for public entertainment: but Mr. Betterton, having had a casual sight of it many years after it was written, begged it for the stage, where it found so favourable a reception as to have an uninterrupted run of at least forty days. The separation of the principal actors, which soon followed, and the introduction of the Italian opera, put a stop to its farther appearance.

Had it been compoſed at a riper time of life the faults might have been fewer: however, upon reviſing it now, at ſo great a diſtance of time, with a cooler judgement than the firſt conceptions of youth will allow, I cannot abſolutely ſay *Scripſiſſe pudet.*

A LET-

A LETTER WITH A CHARACTER OF MR. WYCHERLEY.

MR. WYCHERLEY being the only living author eminent for his writings, with whom it is your misfortune to have no perſonal acquaintance, you deſire me to give you ſome idea of him, in order to perfect a deſign you are about of celebrating ſuch of the poets of the preſent age as you think have deſerved any notice.

My partiality to him as a friend might render what I ſay of him ſuſpected, if his merit was not ſo well and ſo publickly eſtabliſhed as to ſet him above flattery. To do him barely juſtice, is an undertaking beyond my ſkill: however, ſince you deſire it, I will do my beſt, though under the diſadvantage of a painter, who, in drawing a lady Sunderland, or a lady * Monthermer,

* Dutcheſs of Montagu.

might expreſs a reſemblance by which their pictures might be known, but never reach that perfection of beauty, which nothing but an omnipotent hand could form.

My lord Rocheſter, in his imitation of one of Horace's Epiſtles, thus mentions this author:

Of all our modern wits, none ſeems to me
Once to have touch'd upon true Comedy,
But haſty Shadwell, and ſlow Wycherley.
Shadwell's unfiniſh'd works do yet impart
Great proofs of Nature's force, though none of Art:
But Wycherley earns hard whate'er he gains;
He wants no judgement, and he ſpares no pains,

The noble author, however juſt in other particulars, I am perſuaded was led into that part of the character of a laborious writer, merely for the ſake of the verſe. If *haſty* would have ſtood as an epithet for Wycherley, and *ſlow* for Shadwell, they would in all probability have been ſo applied; but the verſe would have been ſpoiled,

ſpoiled, and to that it was neceſſary to ſubmit.

Thoſe who would form their judgement only from Mr. Wycherley's writings, without any perſonal acquaintance with him, might indeed be apt to conclude that ſuch a diverſity of images and characters; ſuch ſtrict enquiries into nature; ſuch cloſe obſervations on the ſeveral humours, manners, and affections of all ranks and degrees of men, and, as it were, ſo true and ſo perfect a diſſection of human kind, delivered with ſo much pointed wit, and force of expreſſion; could be no other than the work of extraordinary diligence, labour, and application: but, in truth, we owe the pleaſure and advantage of having been ſo well entertained and inſtructed by him, to his facility of doing it: if it had been a trouble to him to write, I am much miſtaken if he would not have ſpared himſelf that trouble: what he has performed, would have been difficult for another; but the club which a man of an ordinary ſize could not lift, was but a walking-ſtaff for Hercules.

To judge by the ſharpneſs and ſpirit of his ſatyr, you might be led into another miſtake, and imagine him an ill-natured man: but what my lord Rocheſter ſaid of lord Dorſet, is as applicable to him—*The beſt good man, with the worſt-natur'd Muſe.* As pointed and ſevere as he is in his writings, in his temper he has all the ſoftneſs of the tendereſt diſpoſition; gentle and inoffenſive to every man in his particular character; he only attacks vice as a publick enemy, compaſſionating the wound he is under a neceſſity to probe, or grieving like a good-natured conqueror at the occaſions that provoke him to make ſuch havock.

King Charles the Second, a nice diſcerner of men, and himſelf a man of wit, often choſe him for a companion at his leiſure hours, as Auguſtus did Horace, and had very advantageous views for him; but, unluckily, an amorous inclination interfered, the lover got the better of the courtier, and ambition fell a ſacrifice to love, the predominant paſſion of the nobleſt minds.

In

In the ſubſequent reign, it was his misfortune to fall under the laſh of mercileſs creditors: he was arreſted, and put in priſon; the king himſelf condeſcended to inquire into the ſtate of his debts, paid them, and releaſed him. An action worthy of a monarch.

In the turn of times which has ſince happened, it is not for want of friends, or powerful ſolicitations, that he remains in obſcurity; he can never forget the generoſity of that unfortunate prince; and as in another reign he choſe to be a victim to love, he now chuſes to be a ſacrifice to gratitude. I give you theſe inſtances, to ſhew him to you as lovely in his nature as in his poetical productions.

There are who object to his verſification: it is certain he is no maſter of numbers; but a diamond is not leſs a diamond, for not being poliſhed. In poetry, a ſmooth and harmonious verſification is the ſame with a fine colouring in painting; but if the proportions are right, the poſture juſt, the figure bold, and the reſemblances true to nature, ſuch a piece may give in-

finite

finite delight, and be of ineſtimable value, tho' the colours ſhould happen to be rough or careleſsly laid on. A beautiful face may charm, without the help of complexion; but the faireſt ſkin, with all its lilies and roſes, makes ugline ſs but more remarkable. Where juſtneſs is wanting in the deſign, and ſpirit in the execution, the fineſt colouring Art can invent is but paint upon a frightful face: yet many of our modern writers look no farther; they lay the whole ſtreſs of their endeavours upon the harmony of words; like eunuchs, they ſacrifice their manhood to a voice, and reduce poetry, like echo, to be nothing but ſound.

In my friend, every ſyllable, every thought, is maſculine: his Muſe is not led forth as to a review, but as to a battle; not adorned for parade, but execution; he would be tried by the ſharpneſs of his blade, and not by the finery: like your heroes of antiquity, he charges in iron, and ſeems to deſpiſe all ornament but intrinſick merit.

Con-

Congreve is your familiar acquaintance; you may judge of Wycherley by him: they have the ſame manly way of thinking and writing, the ſame candour, modeſty, humanity, and integrity of manners: it is impoſſible not to love them for their own ſakes, abſtracted from the merit of their works.

In ſhort, Sir, I'll have you judge for yourſelf: I am not ſatisfied with this imperfect ſketch: name your day, and I will bring you together; I ſhall have both your thanks. Let it be at my lodging. I can give you no *Falernum* that has out-lived twenty conſulſhips, but I can promiſe you a bottle of good old Claret that has ſeen two reigns: *Horatian* wit will not be wanting when you two meet. He ſhall bring with him, if you will, a young poet, newly inſpired, in the neighbourhood of Coopers-Hill, whom he and Walſh have taken under their wing; his name is Pope: he is not above ſeventeen or eighteen years of age, and promiſes miracles. If he goes on as he has begun, in the paſtoral way, as Virgil firſt tried his ſtrength,

ſtrength, we may hope to ſee Engliſh poetry vie with the Roman, and this Swan of Windſor ſing as ſweetly as the Mantuan. I expect your anſwer.

Dear Harry, Adieu, &c.

ESSAY

ESSAY UPON UNNATURAL FLIGHTS IN POETRY.

AS when ſome image of a charming face,
In living paint, an artiſt tries to trace,
He carefully conſults each beauteous line,
Adjuſting to his object his deſign;
We praiſe the piece, and give the painter fame,
But as the juſt reſemblance ſpeaks the dame.
Poets are limners of another kind,
To copy out ideas in the mind;
Words are the paint by which their thoughts are ſhown,
And Nature fits the object to be drawn;
The written picture we applaud or blame
But as the due proportions are the ſame.
Who driven with ungovernable fire,
Or, void of art, beyond theſe bounds aſpire,
Gigantic forms and monſtrous births alone
Produce, which Nature, ſhock'd, diſdains to own.
By true reflection I would ſee my face:
Why brings the fool a magnifying-glaſs?

" (1) But

" (1) But Poetry in fiction takes delight,
" And, mounting in bold figures out of ſight,
" Leaves truth behind in her audacious flight:
" Fables and metaphors that always lie,
" And raſh hyperboles that ſoar ſo high,
" And every ornament of verſe muſt die."
Miſtake me not; no figures I exclude,
And but forbid intemperance, not food.
Who would with care ſome happy fiction frame,
So mimics truth, it looks the very ſame;
Not rais'd to force, or feign'd in Nature's ſcorn,
But meant to grace, illuſtrate, and adorn.
Important truths ſtill let your fables hold,
And moral myſteries with art unfold.
Ladies and beaux to pleaſe is all the taſk,
But the ſharp critic will inſtruction aſk.

(1) The poetic world is nothing but fiction; Parnaſſus, Pegaſus, and the Muſes, pure imagination and chimera: but being however a ſyſtem univerſally agreed on, all that has or may be contrived or invented upon this foundation according to Nature ſhall be reputed as truth; but whatſoever ſhall diminiſh from, or exceed, the juſt proportions of Nature ſhall be rejected as falſe, and paſs for extravagance, as dwarfs and giants for monſters.

(2) As

(2) As veils tranſparent cover, but not hide,
Such metaphors appear when right apply'd;
When thro' the phraſe we plainly ſee the ſenſe,
Truth, where the meaning's obvious, will diſpenſe;
The reader what in reaſon's due believes;
Nor can we call that falſe which not deceives.
(3) Hyperboles, ſo daring and ſo bold,
Diſdaining bounds, are yet by rules control'd:
Above

(2) When Homer, mentioning Achilles, terms him a Lion, this is a metaphor, and the meaning is obvious and true, though the literal ſenſe be falſe, the poet intending thereby to give his reader ſome idea of the ſtrength and fortitude of his hero. Had he ſaid that wolf, or that bear, this had been falſe, by preſenting an image not conformable to the nature and character of a hero, &c.

(3) Hyperboles are of divers ſorts, and the manner of introducing them is different: ſome are, as it were, naturalized and eſtabliſhed by a cuſtomary way of expreſſion; as when we ſay ſuch a one is as ſwift as the wind, whiter than ſnow, or the like. Homer, ſpeaking of Nereus, calls him beauty itſelf; Martial of Zoilus, lewdneſs itſelf. Such hyperboles lie indeed, but deceive us not; and therefore Seneca terms them lies that readily conduct our imagination to truths, and have an intelligible ſignification, though the expreſſion be ſtrained

Above the clouds, but ſtill within our ſight,
They mount with truth, and make a tow'ring flight;
Preſenting things impoſſible to view,
They wander thro' incredible to true:
Falſehoods, thus mix'd, like metals are refin'd,
And truth, like ſilver, leaves the droſs behind.
Thus poetry has ample ſpace to ſoar,
Not needs forbidden regions to explore:
Such vaunts as his who can with patience read,
Who thus deſcribes his hero ſlain and dead;
" (4) Kill'd as he was, inſenſible of death,
" He ſtill fights on, and ſcorns to yield his
" breath *."

The

beyond credibility. Cuſtom has likewiſe familiarized another way for hyperboles, for example, by irony; as when we ſay of ſome infamous woman ſhe is a civil perſon, where the meaning is to be taken quite oppoſite to the letter. Theſe few figures are mentioned only for example ſake; it will be underſtood that all others are to be uſed with the like care and diſcretion.

(4) I needed not to have travelled ſo far for an extravagant flight; I remember one of Britiſh growth of the like nature:

See thoſe dead bodies hence convey'd with care,
Life may perhaps return—with change of air.

* Arioſto.

But

The noiſy culverin, o'ercharg'd, lets fly,
And burſt unaiming in the rended ſky.
Such frantic flights are like a madman's dream,
And Nature ſuffers in the wild extreme.
The captive Cannibal, weigh'd down with chains,
Yet braves his foes, reviles, provokes, diſdains;
Of nature fierce, untameable, and proud,
He grins defiance at the gaping crowd,

But I chuſe rather to correct gently, by foreign examples, hoping that ſuch as are conſcious of the like exceſſes will take the hint, and ſecretly reprove themſelves. It may be poſſible for ſome tempers to maintain rage and indignation to the laſt gaſp; but the ſoul and body once parted, there muſt neceſſarily be a determination of action.

Quodcunque oſtendis mihi ſic incredulus odi.

I cannot forbear quoting, on this occaſion, as an example for the preſent purpoſe, two noble lines of Jaſper Maine's, in the collection of the Oxford Verſes printed in the year 1643, upon the death of my grandfather Sir Bevil Granville, ſlain in the heat of action at the battle of Lanſdowne. The poet, after having deſcribed the fight, the ſoldiers animated by the example of their leader, and enraged at his death, thus concludes,

Thus he being ſlain, his action fought anew,
And the dead conquer'd, whilſt the living flew.

This is agreeable to truth, and within the compaſs of nature: it is thus only that the dead can act.

And ſpent at laſt, and ſpeechleſs as he lies,
With looks ſtill threatening, mocks their rage and dies.
This is the utmoſt ſtretch that Nature can,
And all beyond is fulſome, falſe, and vain.
Beauty's the theme; ſome nymph divinely fair
Excites the Muſe: let truth be even there;
As painters flatter, ſo may poets too,
But to reſemblance muſt be ever true.

" (5) The day that ſhe was born, the Cyprian
" Queen
" Had like t' have dy'd thro' envy and thro'
" ſpleen;

(5) Le jour qu'elle naquit, Venus bien qu'immortelle,
Penſa mourir de honte, en la voyant ſi belle,
Les Graces a l'envi deſcendirent des cieux,
Pour avoir l'honeur d'accompagner ſes yeux;
Et l'Amour, qui ne put entrer dans ſon courage,
Voulut obſtinément longer ſur ſon viſage.

This is a lover's deſcription of his miſtreſs by the great Corneille; civil, to be ſure, and polite as any thing can be. Let any body turn over Waller, and he will ſee how much more naturally and delicately the Engliſh author treats the article of love than this celebrated Frenchman. I would not however be thought, by any derogatory quotation, to take from the merit of a writer whoſe reputation is ſo univerſally and ſo juſtly

"The Graces in a hurry left the ſkies
"To have the honour to attend her eyes;
"And Love, deſpairing in her heart a place,
"Would needs take up his lodging in her
"face *."

juſtly eſtabliſhed in all nations; but, as I ſaid before, I rather chuſe, where any failings are to be found, to correct my own countrymen by foreign examples, than to provoke them by inſtances drawn from their own writings; *humanum eſt errare.* I cannot forbear one quotation more from another celebrated French author. It is an epigram upon a monument for Francis I. King of France, by way of queſtion and anſwer, which in Engliſh is verbatim thus:

Under this marble who lies buried here?
Francis the Great, a king beyond compare.
Why has ſo great a king ſo ſmall a ſtone?
Of that great king here's but the heart alone.
Then of this conqueror here lies but part?
No—here he lies all—for he was all heart.

The author was a Gaſcon, to whom I can properly oppoſe nobody ſo well as a Welchman; for which purpoſe I am farther furniſhed, from the fore-mentioned collection of Oxford Verſes, with an epigram by Martin Lluellin upon the ſame ſubject, which I remember to have heard often repeated to me when I was a boy. Beſides, from whence can we draw better examples than from the very ſeat and nurſery of the Muſes?

* Corneille.

Tho' wrote by great Corneille, ſuch lines as theſe,
Such civil nonſenſe, ſure could never pleaſe.
Waller, the beſt of all th' inſpired train,
To melt the fair inſtructs the dying ſwain.

Thus ſlain, thy valiant anceſtor * did lie,
When his one bark a navy did defy;
When now encompaſs'd round he victor ſtood,
And bath'd his pinnace in his conquering blood,
Till, all the purple current dry'd and ſpent,
He fell, and made the waves his monument.
Where ſhall the next fam'd Granville's aſhes ſtand?
Thy grandſire's fill the ſea, and thine the land.

I cannot ſay the two laſt lines, in which conſiſt the ſting or point of the epigram, are ſtrictly conformable to the rule herein ſet down: the word *aſhes*, metaphorically, can ſignify nothing but ſame, which is mere ſound, and can fill no ſpace either of land or ſea: the Welchman however muſt be allowed to have outdone the Gaſcon. The fallacy of the French epigram appears at firſt ſight; but the Engliſh ſtrikes the fancy, ſuſpends and dazzles the judgment, and may perhaps be allowed to paſs under the ſhelter of thoſe daring hyperboles which, by preſenting an obvious meaning, make their way, according to Seneca, through the incredible to true.

* Sir Richard Granville, Vice-admiral of England, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, maintained a fight with his ſingle ſhip againſt the whole armada of Spain, conſiſting of fifty-three of their beſt men of war.

The

(6) The Roman wit *, who impiously divides
His hero and his gods to different sides,
I would condemn, but that, in spite of sense,
Th' admiring world still stands in his defence.
How oft', alas! the best of men in vain
Contend for blessings which the worst obtain!

(6) Victrix causa Deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.

The consent of so many ages having established the reputation of this line, it may perhaps be presumption to attack it; but it is not to be supposed that Cato, who is described to have been a man of rigid morals and strict devotion, more resembling the gods than men, would have chosen any party in opposition to those gods whom he professed to adore. The poet would give us to understand, that his hero was too righteous a person to accompany the divinities themselves in an unjust cause; but to represent a mortal man to be either wiser or juster than the Deity, may shew the impiety of the writer, but add nothing to the merit of the hero; neither reason nor religion will allow it; and it is impossible for a corrupt being to be more excellent than a divine; success implies permission, and not approbation; to place the gods always on the thriving side, is to make them partakers of all successful wickedness: to judge right, we must wait for the conclusion of the action; the catastrophe will best decide on which side is Providence; and the violent death of Cæsar acquits the gods from being companions of his usurpation.

Lucan was a determined Republican, no wonder he was a Free-thinker.

* Lucan.

The

The gods, permitting traitors to succeed,
Become not parties in an impious deed;
And by the tyrant's murder we may find,
That Cato and the gods were of a mind.
Thus forcing truth with such preposterous praise,
Our characters we lessen when we'd raise;
Like castles built by magic art in air,
That vanish at approach, such thoughts appear;
But rais'd on truth by some judicious hand,
As on a rock, they shall for ages stand.
(7) Our King return'd *, and banish'd Peace restor'd,
The Muse ran mad to see her exil'd lord;

(7) Mr. Dryden in one of his prologues has these two lines:

He 's bound to please, not to write well, and knows
There is a mode in plays as well as clothes.

From whence it is plain, where he has exposed himself to the critics, he was forced to follow the fashion to humour an audience, and not to please himself: a hard sacrifice to make for present subsistence, especially for such as would have their writings live as well as themselves. Nor can the poet whose labours are his daily bread be delivered from this cruel necessity, unless some more certain encouragement can be provided than the bare uncertain profits of a third day, and the theatre be put under some more impartial management than the jurisdiction of players. Who write to live must unavoid-

* King Charles II.

ably

On the crack'd ſtage the bedlam heroes roar'd,
And ſcarce could ſpeak one reaſonable word:
Dryden himſelf, to pleaſe a frantic age,
Was forc'd to let his judgment ſtoop to rage;
To a wild audience he conform'd his voice,
Comply'd to cuſtom, but not err'd by choice.

ably comply with their taſte by whoſe approbation they ſubſiſt; ſome generous prince, or prime miniſter like Richlieu, can only find a remedy. In his epiſtle dedicatory to The Spaniſh Friar, this incomparable poet thus cenſures himſelf:

"I remember ſome verſes of my own Maximin and Al-
"manzor which cry vengeance upon me for their extrava-
"gance, &c. All I can ſay for thoſe paſſages, which are, I
"hope, not many, is, that I knew they were bad enough to
"pleaſe even when I wrote them; but I repent of them
"among my ſins; and if any of their fellows intrude by chance
"into my preſent writings, I draw a ſtroke over thoſe Dali-
"lahs of the theatre, and am reſolved I will ſettle myſelf no
"reputation by the applauſe of fools: it is not that I am mor-
"tified to all ambition, but I ſcorn as much to take it from
"half-witted judges as I ſhould to raiſe an eſtate by cheating
"of bubbles: neither do I diſcommend the lofty ſtyle in tra-
"gedy, which is pompous and magnificent; but nothing is
"truly ſublime that is not juſt and proper."

This may ſtand as an unanſwerable apology for Mr. Dryden againſt his critics; and likewiſe for an unqueſtionable authority to confirm thoſe principles which the foregoing poem pretends to lay down; for nothing can be juſt and proper but what is built upon truth.

Deem

Deem then the people's, not the writer's, ſin
Almanzor's rage and rants of Maximin:
That fury ſpent, in each elaborate piece
He vies for fame with ancient Rome and Greece.
Firſt Mulgrave roſe, Roſcommon next *, like light,
To clear our darkneſs, and to guide our flight;
With ſteady judgment, and in lofty ſounds,
They gave us patterns, and they ſet us bounds.
The Stagyrite and Horace laid aſide,
Inform'd by them we need no foreign guide:
Who ſeek from poetry a laſting name,
May in their leſſons learn the road to fame:
But let the bold adventurer be ſure
That every line the teſt of truth endure:
On this foundation may the fabric riſe,
Firm and unſhaken, till it touch the ſkies.
From pulpits baniſh'd, from the court, from love,
Forſaken Truth ſeeks ſhelter in the grove:
Cheriſh, ye Muſes! the neglected fair,
And take into your train th' abandon'd wanderer.

* Earl of Mulgrave's Eſſay upon Poetry, and Lord Roſcommon's upon Tranſlated Verſe.

ROWE.

NICHOLAS ROWE was born at Little Beckford in Bedfordſhire in 1673. His family had long poſſeſſed a conſiderable eſtate, with a good houſe, at Lambertoun * in Devonſhire. The anceſtor from whom he deſcended in a direct line, received the arms borne by his deſcendants for his bravery in the Holy War. His father John Rowe, who was the firſt that quitted his paternal acres to practiſe any art of profit, profeſſed the law, and

* In the Villare, *Lamerton.*

A pub-

publiſhed Benlow's and Dalliſon's Reports in the reign of James the Second, when, in oppoſition to the notions then diligently propagated of diſpenſing power, he ventured to remark how low his authors rated the prerogative. He was made a ſerjeant, and died April 30, 1692. He was buried in the Temple Church.

Nicholas was firſt ſent to a private ſchool at Highgate; and being afterwards removed to Weſtminſter, was at twelve years choſen one of the King's ſcholars. His maſter was Buſby, who ſuffered none of his ſcholars to let their powers lie uſeleſs, and his exerciſes in ſeveral languages are ſaid to have been written with uncommon degrees of excellence,

cellence, and yet to have coſt him very little labour.

At ſixteen he had in his father's opinion made advances in learning ſufficient to qualify him for the ſtudy of law, and was entered a ſtudent of the Middle Temple, where for ſome time he read ſtatutes and reports with proficiency proportionate to the force of his mind, which was already ſuch that he endeavoured to comprehend law, not as a ſeries of precedents, or collection of poſitive precepts, but as a ſyſtem of rational government, and impartial juſtice.

When he was nineteen, he was by the death of his father left more to his own direction, and probably from that time ſuffered law gradually to give way to

poetry. At twenty-five he produced *The Ambitious Stepmother*, which was received with ſo much favour, that he devoted himſelf from that time wholly to the more elegant parts of writing.

His next tragedy (1702) was *Tamerlane*, in which, under the name of Tamerlane, he intended to characteriſe king William, and Lewis the Fourteenth under that of Bajazet. The virtues of Tamerlane ſeem to have been arbitrarily aſſigned him by his poet, for I know not that hiſtory gives any other qualities than thoſe which make a conqueror. The faſhion however of the time was, to accumulate upon Lewis all that can raiſe horror and deteſtation; and whatever good was withheld from him, that it might

might not be thrown away, was beſtowed upon king William.

This was the tragedy which Rowe valued moſt, and that which probably, by the help of political auxiliaries, excited moſt applauſe; but occaſional poetry muſt often content itſelf with occaſional praiſe. Tamerlane has for a long time been acted only once a year, on the night when king William landed. Our quarrel with Lewis has been long over, and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice to ſee him painted with aggravated features, like a Saracen upon a ſign.

The *Fair Penitent*, his next production (1703), is one of the moſt pleaſing tragedies on the ſtage, where it

ſtill keeps its turns of appearing, and probably will long keep them, for there is ſcarcely any work of any poet at once ſo intereſting by the fable, and ſo delightful by the language. The ſtory is domeſtick, and therefore eaſily received by the imagination, and aſſimilated to common life; the diction is exquiſitely harmonious, and ſoft or ſpritely as occaſion requires.

The character of *Lothario* ſeems to have been expanded by Richardſon into *Lovelace*, but he has excelled his original in the moral effect of the fiction. Lothario, with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be deſpiſed, retains too much of the ſpectator's kindneſs. It was in the power

power of Richardſon alone to teach us at once eſteem and deteſtation, to make virtuous reſentment overpower all the benevolence which wit, and elegance, and courage, naturally excite; and to loſe at laſt the hero in the villain.

The fifth act is not equal to the former; the events of the drama are exhauſted, and little remains but to talk of what is paſt. It has been obſerved, that the title of the play does not ſufficiently correſpond with the behaviour of Caliſta, who at laſt ſhews no evident ſigns of repentance, but may be reaſonably ſuſpected of feeling pain from detection rather than from guilt, and expreſſes more ſhame than ſorrow, and more rage than ſhame.

His next (1706) was *Ulyſſes*; which, with the common fate of mythological ſtories, is now generally neglected. We have been too early acquainted with the poetical heroes to expect any pleaſure from their revival; to ſhew them as they have already been ſhewn, is to diſguſt by repetition; to give them new qualities or new adventures, is to offend by violating received notions.

The *Royal Convert* (1708) ſeems to have a better claim to longevity. The fable is drawn from an obſcure and barbarous age, to which fictions are moſt eaſily and properly adapted; for when objects are imperfectly ſeen, they eaſily take forms from imagination. The ſcene lies among our anceſtors in our own country,

country, and therefore very eaſily catches attention. *Rhodogune* is a perſonage truly tragical, of high ſpirit, and violent paſſions, great with tempeſtuous dignity, and wicked with a ſoul that would have been heroic if it had been virtuous. The motto ſeems to tell, that this play was not ſucceſsful.

Rowe does not always remember what his characters require. In *Tamerlane* there is ſome ridiculous mention of the God of Love; and Rhodogune, a ſavage Saxon, talks of Venus, and the eagle that bears the thunder of Jupiter.

This play diſcovers its own date, by a prediction of the *Union*, in imitation of Cranmer's prophetick promiſes to *Henry the Eighth*. The anticipated

bleſſings

bleſſings of union are not very naturally introduced, nor very happily expreſſed.

He once (1706) tried to change his hand. He ventured on a comedy, and produced the *Biter*; with which, though it was unfavourably treated by the audience, he was himſelf delighted; for he is ſaid to have ſat in the houſe, laughing with great vehemence, whenever he had in his own opinion produced a jeſt. But finding that he and the publick had no ſympathy of mirth, he tried at lighter ſcenes no more.

After the Royal Convert (1714) appeared *Jane Shore*, written, as its author profeſſes, *in imitation of Shakeſpeare's ſtile*. In what he thought himſelf an imitator of Shakeſpeare it is not eaſy to conceive.

The

The numbers, the diction, the ſentiments, and the conduct, every thing in which imitation can conſiſt, are remote in the utmoſt degree from the manner of Shakeſpeare, whoſe dramas it reſembles only as it is an Engliſh ſtory, and as ſome of the perſons have their names in hiſtory. This play, conſiſting chiefly of domeſtick ſcenes and private diſtreſs, lays hold upon the heart. The wife is forgiven becauſe ſhe repents, and the huſband is honoured becauſe he forgives. This therefore is one of thoſe pieces which we ſtill welcome on the ſtage.

His laſt tragedy (1715) was *Lady Jane Grey*. This ſubject had been choſen by Mr. Smith, whoſe papers were put into

Rowe's hands ſuch as he deſcribes them in his Preface. This play likewiſe has ſunk into oblivion. From this time he gave nothing more to the ſtage.

Being by a competent fortune exempted from any neceſſity of combating his inclination, he never wrote in diſtreſs, and therefore does not appear to have ever written in haſte. His works were finiſhed to his own approbation, and bear few marks of negligence or hurry. It is remarkable that his prologues and epilogues are all his own, though he ſometimes ſupplied others; he afforded help, but did not ſolicite it.

As his ſtudies neceſſarily made him acquainted with Shakeſpeare, and acquaintance

quaintance produced veneration, he undertook (1709) an edition of his works, from which he neither received much praiſe, nor ſeems to have expected it; yet, I believe, thoſe who compare it with former copies, will find that he has done more than he promiſed; and that, without the pomp of notes or boaſts of criticiſm, many paſſages are happily reſtored. He prefixed a life of the author, ſuch as tradition then almoſt expiring could ſupply, and a preface, which cannot be ſaid to diſcover much profundity or penetration. He at leaſt contributed to the popularity of his author.

He was willing enough to improve his fortune by other arts than poetry.

He

He was undersecretary for three years when the duke of Queensberry was secretary of state, and afterwards applied to the earl of Oxford for some publick employment *. Oxford enjoined him to study Spanish; and when, some time afterwards, he came again, and said that he had mastered it, dismissed him with this congratulation, "Then, "Sir, I envy you the pleasure of read-"ing Don Quixot in the original."

This story is sufficiently attested; but why Oxford, who desired to be thought a favourer of literature, should thus insult a man of acknowledged merit; or how Rowe, who was so keen a Whig † that he did not willingly converse with

* Spence.

† Spence.

men

men of the oppoſite party, could aſk preferment from Oxford, it is not now poſſible to diſcover. Pope, who told the ſtory, did not ſay on what occaſion the advice was given; and though he owned Rowe's diſappointment, doubted whether any injury was intended him, but thought it rather lord Oxford's *odd way*.

It is likely that he lived on diſcontented through the reſt of queen Anne's reign; but the time came at laſt when he found kinder friends. At the acceſſion of king George, he was made poet laureat; I am afraid by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate, who (1716) died in the Mint, where he was forced to ſeek ſhelter for extreme poverty. He was made

made likewiſe one of the land ſurveyors of the cuſtoms of the port of London. The prince of Wales choſe him clerk of his council; and the lord chancellor Parker, as ſoon as he received the ſeals, appointed him, unaſked, ſecretary of the preſentations. Such an accumulation of employments undoubtedly produced a very conſiderable revenue.

Having already tranſlated ſome parts of *Lucan's Pharſalia*, which had been publiſhed in the Miſcellanies, and doubtleſs received many praiſes, he undertook a verſion of the whole work, which he lived to finiſh, but not to publiſh. It ſeems to have been printed under the care of Dr. Welwood, who prefixed the author's life, in which is contained the following character:

"As

"As to his perſon, it was graceful "and well-made; his face regular, and "of a manly beauty. As his ſoul was "well lodged, ſo its rational and animal "faculties excelled in a high degree. He "had a quick and fruitful invention, "a deep penetration, and a large com-"paſs of thought, with ſingular dexte-"rity and eaſineſs in making his "thoughts to be underſtood. He was "maſter of moſt parts of polite learning, "eſpecially the claſſical authors, both "Greek and Latin; underſtood the "French, Italian, and Spaniſh Lan-"guages, and ſpoke the firſt fluently, "and the other two tolerably well.

"He had likewiſe read moſt of the "Greek and Roman hiſtories in their

" original languages, and moſt that are
" wrote in Engliſh, French, Italian,
" and Spaniſh. He had a good taſte
" in philoſophy; and, having a firm
" impreſſion of religion upon his mind,
" he took great delight in divinity and
" eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, in both which
" he made great advances in the times
" he retired into the country, which
" were frequent. He expreſſed, on all
" occaſions, his full perſuaſion of the
" truth of Revealed Religion; and
" being a ſincere member of the eſta-
" bliſhed church himſelf, he pitied,
" but condemned not, thoſe that diſ-
" ſented from it. He abhorred the prin-
" ciples of perſecuting men upon the
" account of their opinions in religion;

"and being ſtrict in his own, he took
"it not upon him to cenſure thoſe of
"another perſuaſion. His converſation
"was pleaſant, witty, and learned, with-
"out the leaſt tincture of affectation
"or pedantry; and his inimitable man-
"ner of diverting and enlivening the
"company, made it impoſſible for any
"one to be out of humour when he
"was in it. Envy and detraction ſeemed
"to be intirely foreign to his conſtitu-
"tion; and whatever provocations he
"met with at any time, he paſt them
"over without the leaſt thought of re-
"ſentment or revenge. As Homer had
"a Zoilus, ſo Mr. Rowe had ſome-
"times his; for there were not wanting
"malevolent people, and pretenders to

" poetry too, that would now-and-then " bark at his beſt performances; but " he was ſo much conſcious of his own " genius, and had ſo much good-nature " as to forgive them; nor could he " ever be tempted to return them an " anſwer.

" The love of learning and poetry " made him not the leſs fit for buſi- " neſs, and nobody applied himſelf " cloſer to it, when it required his at- " tendance. The late duke of Queenſ- " bury, when he was ſecretary of State, " made him his ſecretary for publick " affairs; and when that truly great " man came to know him well, he was " never ſo pleaſed as when Mr. Rowe " was in his company. After the

" duke's

"duke's death, all avenues were ſtopped
"to his preferment; and during the reſt
"of that reign he paſt his time with
"the Muſes and his books, and ſome-
"times the converſation of his friends.

"When he had juſt got to be eaſy in
"his fortune, and was in a fair way to
"make it better, death ſwept him
"away, and in him deprived the world
"of one of the beſt men as well as one
"of the beſt geniuſes of the age. He
"died like a Chriſtian and a Philoſo-
"pher, in charity with all mankind,
"and with an abſolute reſignation to
"the will of God. He kept up his
"good-humour to the laſt; and took
"leave of his wife and friends, imme-
"diately before his laſt agony, with

"the ſame tranquillity of mind, and "the ſame indifference for life, as "though he had been upon taking but "a ſhort journey. He was twice mar-"ried, firſt to a daughter of Mr. Par-"ſons, one of the auditors of the re-"venue; and afterwards to a daughter "of Mr. Deveniſh, of a good family "in Dorſetſhire. By the firſt he had a "ſon; and by the ſecond a daughter, "married afterwards to Mr. Fane. He "died the ſixth of December, 1718, in "the forty-fifth year of his age; and "was buried the nineteenth of the ſame "month in Weſtminſter-abbey, in the "iſle where many of our Engliſh poets "are interred, over-againſt Chaucer, "his body being attended by a ſelect

"num-

"number of his friends, and the dean "and choir officiating at the funeral."

To this character, which is apparently given with the fondneſs of a friend, may be added the teſtimony of Pope; who ſays, in a letter to Blount, "Mr. Rowe accompanied me, and "paſſed a week in the Foreſt. I need "not tell you how much a man of his "turn entertained me; but I muſt ac- "quaint you, there is a vivacity and "gaiety of diſpoſition, almoſt peculiar "to him, which make it impoſſible to "part from him without that uneaſi- "neſs which generally ſucceeds all our "pleaſure."

Pope has left behind him another mention of his companion, leſs advan-

tageous, which is thus reported by Dr. Warburton:

"Rowe, in Mr. Pope's opinion, main-
"tained a decent character, but had no
"heart. Mr. Addiſon was juſtly of-
"fended with ſome behaviour which
"aroſe from that want, and eſtranged
"himſelf from him; which Rowe felt
"very ſeverely. Mr. Pope, their com-
"mon friend, knowing this, took an
"opportunity, at ſome juncture of Mr.
"Addiſon's advancement, to tell him
"how poor Rowe was grieved at
"his diſpleaſure, and what ſatisfaction
"he expreſſed at Mr. Addiſon's good
"fortune; which he expreſſed ſo na-
"turally, that he (Mr. Pope) could not
"but think him ſincere. Mr. Addiſon
"replied,

"replied, "I do not ſuſpect that he "feigned; but the levity of his heart "is ſuch, that he is ſtruck with any "new adventure, and it would affect "him juſt in the ſame manner if he "heard I was going to be hanged."— "Mr. Pope ſaid, he could not deny "but Mr. Addiſon underſtood Rowe "well."

This cenſure Time has not left us the power of confirming or refuting; but obſervation daily ſhews, that much ſtreſs is not to be laid on hyperbolical accuſations, and pointed ſentences, which even he that utters them deſires to be applauded rather than credited. Addiſon can hardly be ſuppoſed to have meant all that he ſaid. Few characters can bear

bear the miſcroſcopick ſcrutiny of wit quickened by anger; and perhaps the beſt advice to authors would be, that they ſhould keep out of the way of one another.

Rowe is chiefly to be conſidered as a tragick writer and a tranſlator. In his attempt at comedy he failed ſo ignominiouſly, that his *Biter* is not inſerted in his works; and his occaſional poems and ſhort compoſitions are rarely worthy of either praiſe or cenſure; for they ſeem the caſual ſports of a mind ſeeking rather to amuſe its leiſure than to exerciſe its powers.

In the conſtruction of his dramas, there is not much art; he is not a nice obſerver of the Unities. He extends time

time and varies place as his convenience requires. To vary the place is not, in my opinion, any violation of Nature, if the change be made between the acts; for it is no leſs eaſy for the ſpectator to ſuppoſe himſelf at Athens in the ſecond act than at Thebes in the firſt; but to change the ſcene, as is done by Rowe in the middle of an act, is to add more acts to the play, ſince an act is ſo much of the buſineſs as is tranſacted without interruption. Rowe, by this licence, eaſily extricates himſelf from difficulties; as in *Jane Grey*, when we have been terrified with all the dreadful pomp of publick execution, and are wondering how the heroine or the poet will proceed, no ſooner has *Jane* pronounced

ſome

ſome prophetick rhymes, than—paſs and be gone—the ſcene cloſes, and *Pembroke* and *Gardiner* are turned out upon the ſtage.

I know not that there can be found in his plays any deep ſearch into nature, any accurate diſcriminations of kindred qualities, or nice diſplay of paſſion in its progreſs; all is general and undefined. Nor does he much intereſt or affect the auditor, except in *Jane Shore*, who is always ſeen and heard with pity. *Alicia* is a character of empty noiſe, with no reſemblance to real ſorrow or to natural madneſs.

Whence, then, has Rowe his reputation? From the reaſonableneſs and propriety of ſome of his ſcenes, from the elegance

gance of his diction, and the ſuavity of his verſe. He ſeldom moves either pity or terror, but he often elevates the ſentiments; he ſeldom pierces the breaſt, but he always delights the ear, and often improves the underſtanding.

His tranſlation of the *Golden Verſes*, and of the firſt book of *Quillet's* Poem, have nothing in them remarkable. The *Golden Verſes* are tedious. The verſion of *Lucan* is one of the greateſt productions of Engliſh poetry; for there is perhaps none that ſo completely exhibits the genius and ſpirit of the original. *Lucan* is diſtinguiſhed by a kind of dictatorial or philoſophick dignity, rather, as Quintilian obſerves, declamatory than poetical; full of ambitious morality and pointed

pointed ſentences, compriſed in vigorous and animated lines. This character Rowe has very diligently and ſucceſsfully preſerved. His verſification, which is ſuch as his contemporaries practiſed, without any attempt at innovation or improvement, ſeldom wants either melody or force. His author's ſenſe is ſometimes a little diluted by additional infuſions, and ſometimes weakened by too much expanſion. But ſuch faults are to be expected in all tranſlations, from the conſtraint of meaſures and diſſimilitude of languages. The *Pharſalia* of Rowe deſerves more notice than it obtains, and as it is more read will be more eſteemed.

4 AP 54

TICKELL.

THOMAS TICKELL, the ſon of the reverend Richard Tickell, was born in 1686 at Bridekirk in Cumberland; and in April 1701 became a member of Queen's College in Oxford; in 1708 he was made Maſter of Arts, and two years afterwards was choſen Fellow; for which, as he did not comply with the ſtatutes by taking orders, he obtained a diſpenſation from the Crown. He held his Fellowſhip till 1726, and

then vacated it, by marrying, in that year, at Dublin.

Tickell was not one of thoſe ſcholars who wear away their lives in cloſets; he entered early into the world, and was long buſy in publick affairs; in which he was initiated under the patronage of Addiſon, whoſe notice he is ſaid to have gained by his verſes in praiſe of *Roſamond*.

To thoſe verſes it would not have been juſt to deny regard; for they contain ſome of the moſt elegant encomiaſtick ſtrains; and, among the innumerable poems of the ſame kind, it will be hard to find one with which they need to fear a compariſon. It may deſerve obſervation, that when Pope wrote long

long afterwards in praiſe of Addiſon, he has copied, at leaſt has reſembled, Tickell.

Let joy ſalute fair Roſamonda's ſhade,
And wreaths of myrtle crown the lovely maid.
While now perhaps with Dido's ghoſt ſhe roves,
And hears and tells the ſtory of their loves,
Alike they mourn, alike they bleſs their fate,
Since love, which made them wretched, made them great;
Nor longer that relentleſs doom bemoan,
Which gain'd a Virgil and an Addiſon.

TICKELL.

Then future ages with delight ſhall ſee
How Plato's, Bacon's, Newton's, looks agree;
Or in fair ſeries laurel'd bards be ſhown,
A Virgil there, and here an Addiſon. POPE.

He produced another piece of the ſame kind at the appearance of *Cato*, with equal ſkill, but not equal happineſs.

When the miniſters of queen Anne were negotiating with France, Tickell publiſhed *The Proſpect of Peace*, a poem, of which the tendency was to reclaim the nation from the pride of conqueſt to the pleaſures of tranquillity. How far Tickell, whom Swift afterwards mentioned as *Whiggiſſimus*, had then connected himſelf with any party, I know not; this poem certainly did not flatter the practices, or promote the opinions, of the men by whom he was afterwards befriended.

Mr. Addiſon, however he hated the men then in power, ſuffered his friend-

ſhip

ſhip to prevail over his publick ſpirit, and gave in the *Spectator* ſuch praiſes of Tickell's poem, that when, after having long wiſhed to peruſe it, I laid hold on it at laſt, I thought it unequal to the honours which it had received, and found it a piece to be approved rather than admired. But the hope excited by a work of genius, being general and indefinite, is rarely gratified. It was read at that time with ſo much favour, that ſix editions were ſold.

At the arrival of king George he ſung *The Royal Progreſs*; which being inſerted in the *Spectator* is well known, and of which it is juſt to ſay that it is neither high nor low.

The poetical incident of moſt importance in Tickell's life was his publication of the firſt book of the *Iliad*, as tranſlated by himſelf, in apparent oppoſition to Pope's *Homer*, of which the firſt part made its entrance into the world at the ſame time.

Addiſon declared that the rival verſions were both good; but that Tickell's was the beſt that ever was made, and with Addiſon the wits, his adherents and followers, were certain to concur. Pope does not appear to have been much diſmayed; *for*, ſays he, *I have the town, that is, the mob, on my ſide.* But he remarks, that *it is common for the ſmaller party to make up in diligence what they want in numbers*; he *appeals to the people*

as his proper judges; and if they are not inclined to condemn him, he is in little care about the high-flyers at Button's.

Pope did not long think Addiſon an impartial judge; for he conſidered him as the writer of Tickell's verſion. The reaſons for his ſuſpicion I will literally tranſcribe from Mr. Spence's Collection.

"There had been a coldneſs between "Mr. Addiſon and me for ſome time; "and we had not been in company to- "gether, for a good while, any where "but at Button's coffee-houſe, where I "uſed to ſee him almoſt every day.— "On his meeting me there, one day in "particular, he took me aſide, and ſaid "he ſhould be glad to dine with me,

" at ſuch a tavern, if I ſtaid till thoſe
" people were gone (Budgel and Phi-
" lips). We went accordingly; and af-
" ter dinner Mr. Addiſon ſaid, " That
" he had wanted for ſome time to talk
" with me; that his friend Tickell had
" formerly, whilſt at Oxford, tranſlated
" the firſt book of the *Iliad*; that he
" deſigned to print it, and had deſired
" him to look it over; that he muſt
" therefore beg that I would not deſire
" him to look over my firſt book, be-
" cauſe, if he did, it would have the
" air of double-dealing." I aſſured him
" that I did not at all take it ill of
" Mr. Tickell that he was going to pub-
" liſh his tranſlation; that he certainly
" had as much right to tranſlate any
" author

" author as myſelf; and that publiſhing
" both was entering on a fair ſtage. I
" then added, that I would not deſire
" him to look over my firſt book of
" the *Iliad*, becauſe he had looked over
" Mr. Tickell's; but could wiſh to have
" the benefit of his obſervations on my
" ſecond, which I had then finiſhed, and
" which Mr. Tickell had not touched
" upon. Accordingly I ſent him the
" ſecond book the next morning; and
" Mr. Addiſon a few days after returned
" it, with very high commendations.—
" Soon after it was generally known that
" Mr. Tickell was publiſhing the firſt
" book of the *Iliad*, I met Dr. Young
" in the ſtreet; and, upon our falling
" into that ſubject, the Doctor expreſſed
" a great

" a great deal of ſurprize at Tickell's
" having had ſuch a tranſlation ſo long
" by him. He ſaid, that it was incon-
" ceivable to him, and that there muſt
" be ſome miſtake in the matter; that
" each uſed to communicate to the
" other whatever verſes they wrote, even
" to the leaſt things; that Tickell could
" not have been buſied in ſo long a work
" there without his knowing ſomething
" of the matter; and that he had never
" heard a ſingle word of it till on this
" occaſion. This ſurprize of Dr. Young,
" together with what Steele has ſaid
" againſt Tickell in relation to this af-
" fair, make it highly probable that
" there was ſome underhand dealing in
" that buſineſs; and indeed Tickell him-
" ſelf,

"ſelf, who is a very fair worthy man,
"has ſince, in a manner, as good as
"owned it to me. Mr. POPE.—[When
"it was introduced into a converſation
"between Mr. Tickell and Mr. Pope by
"a third perſon, Tickell did not deny
"it; which, conſidering his honour and
"zeal for his departed friend, was the
"ſame as owning it.]"

Upon theſe ſuſpicions, with which Dr. Warburton hints that other circumſtances concurred, Pope always in his *Art of Sinking* quotes this book as the work of Addiſon.

To compare the two tranſlations would be tedious; the palm is now given univerſally to Pope; but I think the firſt lines of Tickell's were rather to

be

be preferred, and Pope ſeems to have ſince borrowed ſomething from them in the correction of his own.

When the Hanover ſucceſſion was diſputed, Tickell gave what aſſiſtance his pen would ſupply. His *Letter to Avignon* ſtands high among party-poems; it expreſſes contempt without coarſeneſs, and ſuperiority without inſolence. It had the ſucceſs which it deſerved, being five times printed.

He was now intimately united to Mr. Addiſon, who, when he went into Ireland as ſecretary to the lord Sunderland, took him thither, and employed him in publick buſineſs; and when (1717) afterwards he roſe to be ſecretary of ſtate, made him under-ſecretary.

Their friendſhip ſeems to have continued without abatement; for when Addiſon died, he left him the charge of publiſhing his works, with a ſolemn recommendation to the patronage of Craggs.

To theſe works he prefixed an elegy on the author, which could owe none of its beauties to the aſſiſtance which might be ſuſpected to have ſtrengthened or embelliſhed his earlier compoſitions; but neither he nor Addiſon ever produced nobler lines than are contained in the third and fourth paragraphs, nor is a more ſublime or more elegant funeral poem to be found in the whole compaſs of Engliſh literature.

He

He was afterwards (about 1725) made ſecretary to the Lords Juſtices of Ireland, a place of great honour; in which he continued till 1740, when he died on the twenty-third of April at Bath.

Of the poems yet unmentioned the longeſt is *Kenſington Gardens*, of which the verſification is ſmooth and elegant, but the fiction unſkilfully compounded of Grecian Deities and Gothick Fairies. Neither ſpecies of thoſe exploded Beings could have done much, and when they are brought together, they only make each other contemptible. To Tickell, however, cannot be refuſed a high place among the minor poets; nor ſhould it be forgotten that he was one of the contributors to the *Spectator*. With reſpect

to

to his perſonal character, he is ſaid to have been a man of gay converſation, at leaſt a temperate lover of wine and company, and in his domeſtick relations without cenſure.

THE two Poems which follow would have been inſerted in the Collection, if the compilers could have obtained copies of them. To complete the poetical works of Tickell, they are here copied from the "Select Collection of "Miſcellany Poems, 1780."

OXFORD, A POEM*,

INSCRIBED TO LORD LONSDALE, 1707.

"Unum opus eſt intactæ Palladis urbem
"Carmine perpetuo celebrare'— Hor. 1 Od. vii.

WHILST you, my Lord, adorn that ſtately ſeat,
Where ſhining beauty makes her ſoft retreat,
Enjoying all thoſe graces, uncontrol'd,
Which nobleſt youths would die but to behold;

* Richard, ſecond lord viſcount Lonſdale. He died of the ſmall-pox, Dec. 1, 1713. N.

Whilſt

Whilſt you inhabit Lowther's awful pile,
A ſtructure worthy of the founder's toil;
Amaz'd we ſee the former * Lonſdale ſhine
In each deſcendent of his noble line:
But moſt tranſported and ſurpriz'd we view
His ancient glories all reviv'd in you,
Where charms and virtues join their equal grace,
Your father's godlike ſoul, your mother's lovely face.

Me Fortune and kind Heaven's indulgent care
To famous Oxford and the Muſes bear,
Where, of all ranks, the blooming youths combine
To pay due homage to the mighty Nine,
And ſnatch, with ſmiling joy, the laurel crown,
Due to the learned honours of the gown.
Here I, the meaneſt of the tuneful throng,
Delude the time with an unhallow'd ſong,

* Sir John Lowther, one of the early promoters of the Revolution, was conſtituted vice-chamberlain to King William and Queen Mary on their advancement to the throne; created baron Lowther and viſcount Lonſdale May 28, 1696; and appointed lord privy ſeal in 1699. He died July 10, 1700. N.

Which thus my thanks to much-lov'd Oxford pays,
In no ungrateful, though unartful lays.
Where ſhall I firſt the beauteous ſcene diſcloſe,
And all the gay variety expoſe?
For whereſoe'er I turn my wondering eyes,
Aſpiring towers and verdant groves ariſe,
Immortal greens the ſmiling plains array,
And mazy rivers murmur all the way.
O! might your eyes behold each ſparkling dome,
And freely o'er the beauteous proſpect roam,
Leſs raviſh'd your own Lowther you'd ſurvey,
Though pomp and ſtate the coſtly ſeat diſplay,
Where Art ſo nicely has adorn'd the place,
That Nature's aid might ſeem an uſeleſs grace;
Yet Nature's ſmiles ſuch various charms impart,
That vain and needleſs are the ſtrokes of Art.
In equal ſtate our riſing ſtructures ſhine,
Fram'd by ſuch rules, and form'd by ſuch deſign,
That here, at once ſurpriz'd and pleas'd, we view
Old Athens loſt and conquer'd in the new,

More

More ſweet our ſhades, more fit our bright abodes
For warbling Muſes and inſpiring Gods.
Great * Vanbrook's ſelf might own each artful draught
Equal to models in his curious thought,
Nor ſcorn a fabrick by our plans to frame,
Or in immortal labours ſing their fame;
Both ways he ſaves them from deſtroying fate,
If he but praiſe them, or but imitate.
See, where the ſacred † Sheldon's haughty dome
Rivals the ſtately pomp of ancient Rome,
Whoſe form, ſo great and noble, ſeems deſign'd
T' expreſs the grandeur of its founder's mind.
Here, in one lofty building, we behold
Whate'er the Latian pride could boaſt of old.
True, no dire combats feed the ſavage eye,
And ſtrew the ſand with ſportive cruelty;
But, more adorn'd with what the Muſe inſpires,
It far outſhines their bloody theatres.

* Sir John Vanbrugh. N.
† The Theatre. T.

Delightful ſcene! when here, in equal verſe,
The youthful bards their godlike Queen rehearſe,
To Churchill's wreaths Apollo's laurel join,
And ſing the plains of Hockſtet and Judoign.

Next let the Muſe record our Bodley's ſeat *,
Nor aim at numbers, like the ſubject, great:
All hail, thou fabrick, ſacred to the Nine,
Thy fame immortal, and thy form divine!
Who to thy praiſe attempts the dangerous flight,
Should in thy various tongues be taught to write;
His verſe, like thee, a lofty dreſs ſhould wear,
And breathe the genius which inhabits there;
Thy proper lays alone can make thee live,
And pay that fame, which firſt thyſelf didſt give.
So fountains, which through ſecret channels flow,
And pour above the floods they take below,
Back to their Father Ocean urge their way,
And to the ſea, the ſtreams it gave, repay.

No more we fear the military rage,
Nurs'd-up in ſome obſcure barbarian age;
Nor dread the ruin of our arts divine,
From thick-ſcull'd heroes of the Gothic line,

* The Bodleian Library. T.

Though

Though pale the Romans saw those arms advance,
And wept their learning lost in ignorance.
Let brutal rage around its terrors spread,
The living murder, and consume the dead,
In impious fires let noblest writings burn,
And with their authors share a common urn;
Only, ye Fates, our loved Bodleian spare,
Be IT, and Learning's self shall be your care,
Here every art and every grace shall join,
Collected Phœbus here alone shall shine,
Each other seat be dark, and this be all divine.
Thus when the Greeks imperial Troy defac'd,
And to the ground its fatal walls debas'd,
In vain they burn the work of hands divine,
And vow destruction to the Dardan line,
Whilst good Æneas flies th' unequal wars,
And, with his guardian gods, Iülus bears,
Old Troy for ever stands in him alone,
And all the Phrygian kings survive in one.
Here still presides each Sage's reverend shade,
In soft repose and easy grandeur laid;

Their deathleſs works forbid their fame to die,
Nor Time itſelf their perſons ſhall deſtroy,
Preſerv'd within the living gallery *.
What greater gift could bounteous heaven beſtow,
Than to be ſeen above, and read below?
With deep reſpect I bend my duteous head,
To ſee the faithful likeneſs of the dead;
But O! what Muſe can equal warmth impart?
The Painter's ſkill tranſcends the Poet's art.
When round the pictur'd Founders I deſcry,
With goodneſs ſoft, and great with majeſty,
So much of life the artful colours give,
Scarce more within their Colleges they live;
My blood begins in wilder rounds to roll,
And pleaſing tumults combat in my ſoul;
An humble awe my downcaſt eyes betray,
And only leſs than adoration pay.
Such were the Roman Fathers, when, o'ercome,
They ſaw the Gauls inſult o'er conquer'd Rome;
Each captive ſeem'd the haughty victor's lord,
And proſtrate chiefs their awful ſlaves ador'd.

* The Picture-gallery. T.

Such

Such art as this adorns your Lowther's hall,
Where feaſting gods carouſe upon the wall;
The nectar, which creating paint ſupplies,
Intoxicates each pleas'd ſpectator's eyes;
Who view, amaz'd, the figures heavenly fair,
And think they breathe the true Elyſian air.
With ſtrokes ſo bold, great Verrio's hand has drawn
The gods in dwellings brighter than their own.
Fir'd with a thouſand raptures, I behold
What lively features grac'd each Bard of old;
Such lips, I think, did guide his charming tongue,
In ſuch an air as this the Poet ſung;
Such eyes as theſe glow'd with the ſacred fire,
And hands like theſe employ'd the vocal lyre.
Quite raviſh'd, I purſue each image o'er,
And ſcarce admire their deathleſs labours more.
See where the gloomy Scaliger appears,
Each ſhade is critick, and each feature ſneers;
The artful Ben ſo ſmartly ſtrikes the eye,
I more than ſee a fancy'd comedy;
The muddy Scotus crowns the motley ſhew,
And metaphyſicks cloud his wrinkled brow.

But distant awe invades my beating breast,
To see great Ormond in the paint expresst;
With fear I view the figure from afar,
Which burns with noble ardour for the war;
But near approaches free my doubting mind,
To view such sweetness with such grandeur join'd.

Here studious heads the graver tablet shews,
And there with martial warmth the picture glows;
The blooming youth here boasts a brighter hue,
And painted virgins far outshine the true.

Hail, Colours, which with Nature bear a strife,
And only want a voice to perfect life!
The wondering stranger makes a sudden stand,
And pays low homage to the lovely band;
Within each frame a real Fair believes,
And vainly thinks the mimic canvass lives;
Till, undeceiv'd, he quits th' enchanting shew,
Pleas'd with the art, though he laments it too.

So when his Juno bold Ixion woo'd,
And aim'd at pleasures worthy of a god,
A beauteous cloud was form'd by angry Jove,
Fit to invite, though not indulge his love;

The

The Mortal thought he ſaw his Goddeſs ſhine,
And all the lying Graces look'd divine;
But when with heat he claſp'd her fancied charms,
The empty vapour baulk'd his eager arms.
Loth to depart, I leave th' inviting ſcene,
Yet ſcarce forbear to view it o'er again;
But ſtill new objects give a new delight,
And various proſpects bleſs the wandering ſight.
Aloft in ſtate the airy towers ariſe,
And with new luſtre deck the wondering ſkies;
Lo! to what height the ſchools aſcending reach,
Built with that art which they alone can teach;
The lofty dome expands her ſpacious gate,
Where all the decent Graces jointly wait;
In every ſhape the God of Art reſorts,
And crouds of Sages fill th' extended courts.
With wonders fraught the bright Muſeum ſee,
Itſelf the greateſt curioſity!
Where Nature's choiceſt treaſure, all combin'd,
Delight at once, and quite confound the mind;
Ten thouſand ſplendors ſtrike the dazzled eye,
And form on earth another galaxy.

Here

Here colleges in ſweet confuſion riſe,
There temples ſeem to reach their native ſkies;
Spires, towers, and groves, compoſe the various ſhew,
And mingled proſpects charm the doubting view;
Who can deny their characters divine,
Without reſplendent, and inſpir'd within?
But, ſince above my weak and artleſs lays,
Let their own poets ſing their equal praiſe.

One labour more my grateful verſe renews,
And rears aloft the low-deſcending Muſe;
The building *, parent of my young eſſays,
Aſks in return a tributary praiſe.
Pillars ſublime bear up the learned weight,
And antique Sages tread the pompous height;
Whilſt guardian Muſes ſhade the happy piles,
And all around diffuſe propitious ſmiles.
Here Lancaſter, adorn'd with every grace,
Stands chief in merit, as the chief in place:
To his lov'd name our earlieſt lays belong,
The theme at once, and patron of our ſong.

* Queen's College Library. See the following Poem. N.

Long

Long may he o'er his much-lov'd Queen's pre-
side,
Our arts encourage, and our counſels guide;
Till after-ages, fill'd with glad ſurprize,
Behold his image all majeſtic riſe,
Where now in pomp a venerable band,
Princes and Queens, and holy Fathers, ſtand.
Good Egglesfield * claims homage from the eye,
And the hard ſtone ſeems ſoft with piety;
The mighty monarchs ſtill the ſame appear,
And every marble frown provokes the war;
Whilſt rugged rocks, mark'd with Philippa's face,
Soften to charms, and glow with new-born grace.
A ſight leſs noble did the warriors yield,
Transform'd to ſtatues by the Gorgon ſhield;
Diſtorting fear the coward's form confeſt,
And fury ſeem'd to heave the hero's breaſt;
The lifeleſs rocks each various thought betray'd,
And all the ſoul was in the ſtone diſplay'd.
Too high, my verſe, has been thy daring flight,
Thy ſofter numbers now the groves invite,

* Robert Egglesfield, B. D. the founder, 1340. N.

Where ſilent ſhades provoke the ſpeaking lyre,
And chearful objects happy ſongs inſpire,
At once beſtow rewards, and thoughts infuſe,
Compoſe a garland, and ſupply a Muſe.
Behold around, and ſee the living green
In native colours paints a blooming ſcene;
Th' eternal buds no deadly Winter fear,
But ſcorn the coldeſt ſeaſon of the year;
Apollo ſure will bleſs the happy place,
Which his own Daphne condeſcends to grace;
For here the everlaſting laurels grow,
In every grotto, and on every brow.
Proſpects ſo gay demand a Congreve's ſtrains,
To call the gods and nymphs upon the plains;
Pan yields his empire o'er the ſylvan throng,
Pleas'd to ſubmit to his ſuperior ſong;
Great Denham's genius looks with rapture down;
And Spenſer's ſhade reſigns the rural crown.
Fill'd with great thoughts, a thouſand Sages rove
Through every field and ſolitary grove;
Whoſe ſouls, aſcending an exalted height,
Out-ſoar the drooping Muſe's vulgar flight,

That longs to ſee her darling votaries laid
Beneath the covert of ſome gentle ſhade,
Where purling ſtreams and warbling birds conſpire
To aid th' enchantments of the trembling lyre.
Bear me, ſome God, to Chriſt-Church, royal ſeat,
And lay me ſoftly in the green retreat,
Where Aldrich holds o'er Wit the ſovereign power,
And crowns the Poets which he taught before.
To Aldrich Britain owes her tuneful Boyle,
The nobleſt trophy of the conquer'd iſle;
Who adds new warmth to our poetic fire,
And gives to England the Hibernian lyre.
Philips, by Phœbus and his Aldrich taught,
Sings with that heat wherewith his Churchill fought,
Unfetter'd, in great Milton's ſtrain he writes,
Like Milton's angels whilſt his hero fights;
Purſues the Bard, whilſt he with honour can,
Equals the Poet, and excels the man.

O'er all the plains, the ſtreams, and woods around,
The pleaſing lays of ſweeteſt Bards reſound;
A faithful echo every note returns,
And liſtening River-Gods neglect their urns.
When Codrington * and Steele their verſe unrein,
And form an eaſy, unaffected ſtrain,
A double wreath of laurel binds their brow,
As they are poets and are warriors too.
Trapp's lofty ſcenes in gentle numbers flow,
Like Dryden great, as ſoft as moving Rowe.
When youthful Harriſon †, with tuneful ſkill,
Makes Woodſtock Park ſcarce yield to Cooper's Hill;
Old Chaucer from th' Elyſian Fields looks down,
And ſees at length a genius like his own;
Charm'd with his lays, which reach the ſhades below,
Fair Roſamonda intermits her woe,
Forgets the anguiſh of an injur'd ſoul,
The fatal poignard, and invenom'd bowl.

* The great benefactor to All-ſouls College. N.

† Of whom, ſee Select Collection, vol. IV. p. 180. N.

Apollo

Apollo ſmiles on Magd'len's peaceful bowers,
Perfumes the air, and paints the grot with flowers,
Where Yalden learn'd to gain the myrtle crown,
And every Muſe was fond of Addiſon.
Applauded man! for weightier truſts deſign'd,
For once diſdain not to unbend thy mind;
Thy mother Iſis and her groves rehearſe,
A ſubject not unworthy of thy verſe;
So Latian Fields will ceaſe to boaſt thy praiſe,
And yield to Oxford, painted in thy lays:
And when the age to come, from envy free,
What thou to Virgil giv'ſt ſhall give to thee,
Iſis, immortal by the Poet's ſkill,
"Shall, in the ſmooth deſcription, murmur "ſtill*;"
New beauties ſhall adorn our ſylvan ſcene,
And in thy numbers grow for ever green.
Danby's fam'd gift † ſuch verſe as thine requires,
Exalted raptures, and celeſtial fires;

* Letter from Italy, by Mr. Addiſon. T.

† The Phyſic-garden at Oxford. This hint was happily taken-up in 1713 by Dr. Evans. See Select Collection, 1780, vol. III. p. 145. N.

Apollo

Apollo here ſhould plenteouſly impart,
As well his ſinging, as his curing art;
Nature herſelf the healing garden loves,
Which kindly her declining ſtrength improves,
Baffles the ſtrokes of unrelenting Death,
Can break his arrows, and can blunt his teeth.
How ſweet the landſkip! where, in living trees,
Here frowns a vegetable Hercules!
There fam'd Achilles learns to live again,
And looks yet angry in the mimic ſcene;
Here artful birds, which blooming arbours ſhew,
Seem to fly higher, whilſt they upwards grow,
From the ſame leaves both arms and warriors riſe,
And every bough a different charm ſupplies.
So when our world the great Creator made,
And, unadorn'd, the ſluggiſh chaos laid,
Horror and Beauty own'd their ſire the ſame,
And Form itſelf from Parent Matter came,
That lumpiſh maſs alone was ſource of all,
And Bards and Themes had one original.
In vain the groves demand my longer ſtay,
The gentle Iſis wafts the Muſe away;

With

With eaſe the river guides her wandering ſtream,
And haſtes to mingle with uxorious Thame,
Attempting Poets on her banks lie down,
And quaff, inſpir'd, the better Helicon,
Harmonious ſtrains adorn their various themes,
Sweet as the banks, and flowing as the ſtreams.
Bleſs'd we, whom bounteous Fortune here has thrown,
And made the various bleſſings all our own!
Nor crowns, nor globes, the pageantry of ſtate,
Upon our humble, eaſy ſlumbers wait;
Nor aught that is Ambition's lofty theme
Diſturbs our ſleep, and gilds the gaudy dream.
Touch'd by no ills which vex th' unhappy great,
We only read the changes in the ſtate,
Triumphant Marlborough's arms at diſtance hear,
And learn from Fame the rough events of war;
With pointed rhymes the Gallic tyrant pierce,
And make the cannon thunder in our verſe.
See how the matchleſs youth their hours improve,
And in the glorious way to knowledge move!

Eager for fame, prevent the rising sun,
And watch the midnight labours of the moon.
Not tender years their bold attempts restrain,
Who leave dull Time, and hasten into man,
Pure to the soul, and pleasing to the eyes,
Like angels youthful, and like angels wise.

Some learn the mighty deeds of ages gone,
And, by the lives of heroes, form their own;
Now view the Granique choak'd with heaps of slain,
And warring worlds on the Pharsalian plain;
Now hear the trumpets clangour from afar,
And all the dreadful harmony of war;
Now trace those secret tricks that lost a state,
And search the fine-spun arts that made it great,
Correct those errors that its ruin bred,
And bid some long-lost empire rear its ancient head.

Others, to whom persuasive arts belong
(Words in their looks, and music on their tongue),
Instructed by the wit of Greece and Rome,
Learn richly to adorn their native home;

Whilst

Whilſt liſtening crowds confeſs the ſweet ſurprize,
With pleaſure in their breaſts, and wonder in their eyes.

Here curious minds the latent ſeeds diſcloſe,
And Nature's darkeſt labyrinths expoſe;
Whilſt greater ſouls the diſtant worlds deſcry,
Pierce to the out-ſtretch'd borders of the ſky,
Enlarge the ſearching mind, and broad expand the eye.

O you, whoſe riſing years ſo great began,
In whoſe bright youth I read the ſhining man,
O Lonſdale, know what nobleſt minds approve,
The thoughts they cheriſh, and the arts they love:
Let theſe examples your young boſom fire,
And bid your ſoul to boundleſs height aſpire.
Methinks I ſee you in our ſhades retir'd,
Alike admiring, and by all admir'd:
Your eloquence now charms my raviſh'd ear,
Which future ſenates ſhall tranſported hear,
Now mournful verſe inſpires a pleaſing woe,
And now your cheeks with warlike fury glow,
Whilſt on the paper fancy'd fields appear,
And proſpects of imaginary war;

Your martial ſoul ſees Hockſtet's fatal plain,
Or fights the fam'd Ramilia o'er again.
But I in vain theſe lofty names rehearſe,
Above the faint attempts of humble verſe,
Which Garth ſhould in immortal ſtrains deſign,
Or Addiſon exalt with warmth divine;
A meaner ſong my tender voice requires,
And fainter lays confeſs the fainter fires,
By Nature fitted for an humble theme,
A painted proſpect, or a murmuring ſtream,
To tune a vulgar note in Echo's praiſe,
Whilſt Echo's ſelf reſounds the flattering lays;
Or, whilſt I tell how Myra's charms ſurprize,
Paint roſes on her cheeks, and ſuns within her eyes.
O, did proportion'd height to me belong,
Great Anna's name ſhould grace th' ambitious ſong;
Illuſtrious dames ſhould round their Queen reſort,
And Lonſdale's mother crown the ſplendid court;
Her noble ſon ſhould boaſt no vulgar place,
But ſhare the ancient honours of his race;

Whilſt each fair daughter's face and conquering eyes
To Venus only ſhould ſubmit the prize.
O matchleſs beauties! more than heavenly fair,
Your looks reſiſtleſs, and divine your air,
Let your bright eyes their bounteous beams diffuſe,
And no fond Bard ſhall aſk an uſeleſs Muſe;
Their kindling rays excite a noble fire,
Give beauty to the ſong, and muſic to the lyre.
This charming theme I ever could purſue,
And think the inſpiration ever new,
Did not the God my wandering pen reſtrain,
And bring me to his Oxford back again.
Oxford, the Goddeſs Muſe's native home,
Inſpir'd like Athens, and adorn'd like Rome!
Hadſt thou of old been Learning's fam'd retreat,
And Pagan Muſes choſe thy lovely ſeat,
O, how unbounded had their fiction been!
What fancy'd viſions had adorn'd the ſcene!
Upon each hill a Sylvan Pan had ſtood,
And every thicket boaſted of a God;

Satyrs had frisk'd in each poetic grove,
And not a stream without its Nymphs could move;
Each summit had the train of Muses shew'd,
And Hippocrene in every fountain flow'd;
The tales, adorn'd with each poetic grace,
Had look'd almost as charming as the place.
Ev'n now we hear the world with transports own
Those fictions by more wond'rous truths outdone;
Here pure Eusebia keeps her holy seat,
And Themis smiles from Heaven on this retreat;
Our chaster Graces own refin'd desires,
And all our Muses burn with vestal fires;
Whilst Guardian-angels our Apollo's stand,
Scattering rich favours with a bounteous hand,
To bless the happy air, and sanctify the land.
O pleasing shades! O ever-green retreats!
Ye learned grottoes! and ye sacred seats!
Never may your politer arts refuse,
But entertain in peace the bashful Muse!

So

So may you be kind Heaven's diſtinguiſh'd care,
And may your fame be laſting, as 'tis fair!
Let greater Bards on fam'd Parnaſſus dream,
Or taſte th' inſpiring Heliconian ſtream;
Yet, whilſt our Oxford is the bleſs'd abode
Of every Muſe, and every tuneful God,
Parnaſſus owns its honours far outdone,
And Iſis boaſts more Bards than Helicon.
A thouſand bleſſings I to Oxford owe,
But you, my Lord, th' inſpiring Muſe beſtow;
Grac'd with your name th' unpoliſh'd poem ſhines,
You guard its faults, and conſecrate the lines.
O might you here meet my deſiring eyes,
My drooping ſong to nobler heights would riſe:
Or might I come to breathe your Northern air,
Yet ſhould I find an equal pleaſure there;
Your preſence would the harſher climate ſooth,
Huſh every wind, and every mountain ſmooth;
Would bid the groves in ſpringing pomp ariſe,
And open charming viſta's to the eyes;

Would

Would make my trifling verſe be heard around,
And ſportive Echo play the empty ſound:
With you I ſhould a better Phœbus find,
And own in you alone the charms of Oxford join'd.

ON

ON QUEEN CAROLINE'S REBUILDING THE LODGINGS OF THE BLACK PRINCE AND HENRY V. AT QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

WHERE bold and graceful ſoars, ſecure of fame,
The pile, now worthy great Philippa's name,
Mark that old ruin, Gothic and uncouth,
Where the Black Edward paſs'd his beardleſs youth;
And the Fifth Henry, for his firſt renown,
Out-ſtripp'd each rival in a ſtudent's gown.
In that coarſe age were Princes fond to dwell
With meagre monks, and haunt the ſilent cell:
Sent from the Monarch's to the Muſe's court,
Their meals were frugal, and their ſleeps were ſhort;

To couch at curfeu-time they thought no ſcorn,
And froze at matins every winter-morn;
They read, an early book, the ſtarry frame,
And liſp'd each conſtellation by its name;
Art after art ſtill dawning to their view,
And their mind opening as their ſtature grew.
Yet, whoſe ripe manhood ſpread our fame ſo far,
Sages in peace, and demi-gods in war!
Who, ſtern in fight, made echoing Creſſy ring,
And, mild in conqueſt, ſerv'd his captive king!
Who gain'd, at Agincourt, the victor's bays;
Nor took himſelf, but gave good Heaven, the praiſe!
Thy nurſelings, ancient dome! to virtue form'd;
To mercy liſtening, whilſt in fields they ſtorm'd;
Fierce to the fierce; and warm th' oppreſt to ſave;
Through life rever'd, and worſhip'd in the grave!
In tenfold pride their mouldering roofs ſhall ſhine,
The ſtately work of bounteous Caroline;

And

And bleſt Philippa, with unenvious eyes,
From Heaven behold her Rival's fabric riſe.
If ſtill, bright Saint, this ſpot deſerves thy care,
Incline thee to th' ambitious Muſe's prayer:
O, could'ſt thou win young William's bloom to grace
His Mother's walls, and fill thy Edward's place,
How would that Genius, whoſe propitious wings
Have here twice hover'd o'er the Sons of Kings,
Deſcend triumphant to his ancient ſeat,
And take in charge a third Plantagenet!

4 AP 54

CONGREVE.

WILLIAM CONGREVE, deſcended from a family in Staffordſhire, of ſo great antiquity that it claims a place among the few that extend their line beyond the Norman Conqueſt; and was the ſon of William Congreve, ſecond ſon of Richard Congreve of Congreve and Stratton. He viſited, once at leaſt, the reſidence of his anceſtors; and, I believe, more places than one are ſtill ſhewn, in groves and gardens, where he is related to have written his *Old Batchelor*.

Neither the time nor place of his birth are certainly known: if the inſcription upon his monument be true, he was born in 1672. For the place; it was ſaid by himſelf that he owed his nativity to England, and by every body elſe that he was born in Ireland. Southerne mentioned him with ſharp cenſure, as a man that meanly diſowned his native country. The biographers aſſign his nativity to * Bardſa, near Leeds in Yorkſhire, from the account given by himſelf, as they ſuppoſe, to Jacob.

To doubt whether a man of eminence has told the truth about his own birth, is, in appearance, to be very deficient in candour; yet nobody can live long with-

* The Villare has no *Bardſa*, nor a *Bardſey*, in Yorkſhire.

out knowing that falſehoods of convenience or vanity, falſehoods from which no evil immediately viſible enſues except the general degradation of human teſtimony, are very lightly uttered, and, once uttered, are ſullenly ſupported. Boileau, who deſired to be thought a rigorous and ſteady moraliſt, having told a petty lie to Lewis XIV. continued it afterwards by falſe dates; thinking himſelf obliged *in honour*, ſays his admirer, to maintain what, when he ſaid it, was ſo well received.

Wherever Congreve was born, he was educated firſt at Kilkenny, and afterwards at Dublin, his father having ſome military employment that ſtationed him in Ireland: but after having paſſed through

the uſual preparatory ſtudies, as may be reaſonably ſuppoſed with great celerity and ſucceſs, his father thought it proper to aſſign him a profeſſion, by which ſomething might be gotten; and about the time of the Revolution ſent him, at the age of ſixteen, to ſtudy law in the Middle Temple, where he lived for ſeveral years, but with very little attention to Statutes or Reports.

His diſpoſition to become an author appeared very early, as he very early felt that force of imagination, and poſſeſſed that copiouſneſs of ſentiment, by which intellectual pleaſure can be given. His firſt performance was a novel, called *Incognita, or Love and Duty reconciled:* It is praiſed by the biographers, who

quote ſome part of the preface, that is indeed, for ſuch a time of life, uncommonly judicious. I would rather praiſe it than read it.

His firſt dramatick labour was the *Old Batchelor*; of which he ſays, in his defence againſt Collier, "that comedy "was written, as ſeveral know, ſome "years before it was acted. When I "wrote it, I had little thoughts of the "ſtage; but did it, to amuſe myſelf, in "a ſlow recovery from a fit of ſickneſs. "Afterwards through my indiſcretion it "was ſeen, and in ſome little time more "it was acted; and I, through the re-"mainder of my indiſcretion, ſuffered "myſelf to be drawn in, to the proſe-"cution of a difficult and thankleſs

"ſtudy, and to be involved in a perpe-
"tual war with knaves and fools."

There ſeems to be a ſtrange affectation in authors of appearing to have done every thing by chance. The *Old Batchelor* was written for amuſement, in the languor of convaleſcence. Yet it is apparently compoſed with great elaborateneſs of dialogue, and inceſſant ambition of wit. The age of the writer conſidered, it is indeed a very wonderful performance; for, whenever written, it was acted (1693) when he was not more than twenty-one years old; and was then recommended by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Southerne, and Mr. Maynwaring. Dryden ſaid that he never had ſeen ſuch a firſt play; but they found it deficient

in

in ſome things requiſite to the ſucceſs of its exhibition, and by their greater experience fitted it for the ſtage. Southerne uſed to relate of one comedy, probably of this, that when Congreve read it to the players, he pronounced it ſo wretchedly that they had almoſt rejected it; but they were afterwards ſo well perſuaded of its excellence, that, for half a year before it was acted, the manager allowed its author the privilege of the houſe.

Few plays have ever been ſo beneficial to the writer; for it procured him the patronage of Halifax, who immediately made him one of the commiſſioners for licenſing coaches, and ſoon after gave him a place in the pipe-office,

and another in the cuſtoms of ſix hundred pounds a year. Congreve's converſation muſt ſurely have been at leaſt equally pleaſing with his writings.

Such a comedy, written at ſuch an age, requires ſome conſideration. As the lighter ſpecies of dramatick poetry profeſſes the imitation of common life, of real manners, and daily incidents, it apparently preſuppoſes a familiar knowledge of many characters, and exact obſervation of the paſſing world; the difficulty therefore is to conceive how this knowledge can be obtained by a boy.

But if the *Old Batchelor* be more nearly examined, it will be found to be one of thoſe comedies which may be made by a mind vigorous and acute, and furniſhed with comick characters by the peruſal

perusal of other poets, without much actual commerce with mankind. The dialogue is one constant reciprocation of conceits, or clash of wit, in which nothing flows necessarily from the occasion, or is dictated by nature. The characters both of men and women are either fictitious and artificial, as those of *Heartwell* and the Ladies; or easy and common, as *Wittol* a tame idiot, *Bluff* a swaggering coward, and *Fondlewife* a jealous puritan; and the catastrophe arises from a mistake not very probably produced, by marrying a woman in a mask.

Yet this gay comedy, when all these deductions are made, will still remain the work of a very powerful and fertile mind:

mind: the dialogue is quick and ſparkling, the incidents ſuch as ſeize the attention, and the wit ſo exuberant that it *over-informs its tenement.*

Next year he gave another ſpecimen of his abilities in *The Double Dealer*, which was not received with equal kindneſs. He writes to his patron the lord Halifax a dedication, in which he endeavours to reconcile the reader to that which found few friends among the audience. Theſe apologies are always uſeleſs; *de guſtibus non eſt diſputandum*; men may be convinced, but they cannot be pleaſed, againſt their will. But though taſte is obſtinate, it is very variable, and time often prevails when arguments have failed.

Queen

Queen Mary conferred upon both thoſe plays the honour of her preſence; and when ſhe died, ſoon after, Congreve teſtified his gratitude by a deſpicable effuſion of elegiac paſtoral; a compoſition in which all is unnatural, and yet nothing is new.

In another year (1695) his prolifick pen produced *Love for Love*; a comedy of nearer alliance to life, and exhibiting more real manners, than either of the former. The character of *Foreſight* was then common. Dryden calculated nativities; both Cromwell and king William had their lucky days; and Shafteſbury himſelf, though he had no religion, was ſaid to regard predictions. The

Sailor

Sailor is not accounted very natural, but he is very pleaſant.

With this play was opened the New Theatre, under the direction of Betterton the tragedian; where he exhibited, two years afterwards (1697), *The Mourning Bride*, a tragedy, ſo written as to ſhew him ſufficiently qualified for either kind of dramatick poetry.

In this play, of which, when he afterwards reviſed it, he reduced the verſification to greater regularity, there is more buſtle than ſentiment; the plot is buſy and intricate, and the events take hold on the attention; but, except a very few paſſages, we are rather amuſed with noiſe, and perplexed with ſtratagem, than entertained with any true delineation

tion of natural characters. This, however, was received with more benevolence than any other of his works, and ſtill continues to be acted and applauded.

But whatever objections may be made either to his comick or tragick excellence, they are loſt at once in the blaze of admiration, when it is remembered that he had produced theſe four plays before he had paſſed his twenty-fifth year; before other men, even ſuch as are ſome time to ſhine in eminence, have paſſed their probation of literature, or preſume to hope for any other notice than ſuch as is beſtowed on diligence and inquiry. Among all the efforts of early genius which literary hiſtory records, I doubt

doubt whether any one can be produced that more ſurpaſſes the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve.

About this time began the long-continued controverſy between Collier and the poets. In the reign of Charles the Firſt the Puritans had raiſed a violent clamour againſt the drama, which they conſidered as an entertainment not lawful to Chriſtians, an opinion held by them in common with the church of Rome; and Prynne publiſhed *Hiſtrio-maſtix*, a huge volume, in which ſtage-plays were cenſured. The outrages and crimes of the Puritans brought afterwards their whole ſyſtem of doctrine into diſrepute, and from the Reſtoration the poets and the players were left at quiet;

quiet; for to have moleſted them would have had the appearance of tendency to puritanical malignity.

This danger, however, was worn away by time; and Collier, a fierce and implacable Nonjuror, knew that an attack upon the theatre would never make him ſuſpected for a Puritan; he therefore (1698) publiſhed *A ſhort View of the Immorality and Profaneneſs of the Engliſh Stage*, I believe with no other motive than religious zeal and honeſt indignation. He was formed for a controvertiſt; with ſufficient learning; with diction vehement and pointed, though often vulgar and incorrect; with unconquerable pertinacity; with wit in the higheſt degree keen and ſarcaſtick; and with all

all thoſe powers exalted and invigorated by juſt confidence in his cauſe.

Thus qualified, and thus incited, he walked out to battle, and aſſailed at once moſt of the living writers, from Dryden to Durfey. His onſet was violent: thoſe paſſages, which while they ſtood ſingle had paſſed with little notice, when they were accumulated and expoſed together, excited horror; the wiſe and the pious caught the alarm, and the nation wondered why it had ſo long ſuffered irreligion and licentiouſneſs to be openly taught at the publick charge.

Nothing now remained for the poets but to reſiſt or fly. Dryden's conſcience, or his prudence, angry as he was, with-

held

held him from the conflict; Congreve and Vanbrug attempted anſwers. Congreve, a very young man, elated with ſucceſs, and impatient of cenſure, aſſumed an air of confidence and ſecurity. His chief artifice of controverſy is to retort upon his adverſary his own words: he is very angry, and, hoping to conquer Collier with his own weapons, allows himſelf in the uſe of every term of contumely and contempt; but he has the ſword without the arm of Scanderbeg; he has his antagoniſt's coarſeneſs, but not his ſtrength. Collier replied; for conteſt was his delight, he was not to be frighted from his purpoſe or his prey.

The cauſe of Congreve was not tenable: whatever gloſſes he might uſe for the defence or palliation of ſingle paſſages, the general tenour and tendency of his plays muſt always be condemned. It is acknowledged, with univerſal conviction, that the peruſal of his works will make no man better; and that their ultimate effect is to repreſent pleaſure in alliance with vice, and to relax thoſe obligations by which life ought to be regulated.

The ſtage found other advocates, and the diſpute was protracted through ten years; but at laſt Comedy grew more modeſt, and Collier lived to ſee the reward of his labour in the reformation of the theatre.

Of

Of the powers by which this important victory was atchieved, a quotation from *Love for Love*, and the remark upon it, may afford a ſpecimen.

Sir Sampſ. *Sampſon's a very good name; for your Sampſons were ſtrong dogs from the beginning.*

Angel. *Have a care—If you remember, the ſtrongeſt Sampſon of your name pull'd an old houſe over his head at laſt.*

"Here you have the Sacred Hiſtory "burleſqued, and Sampſon once more "brought into the houſe of Dagon, to "make ſport for the Philiſtines!"

Congreve's laſt play was *The Way of the World*; which, though, as he hints in his dedication, it was written with great labour and much thought, was received

with ſo little favour, that, being in a high degree offended and diſguſted, he reſolved to commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience.

From this time his life ceaſed to be publick: he lived for himſelf, and for his friends; and among his friends was able to name every man of his time whom wit and elegance had raiſed to reputation. It may be therefore reaſonably ſuppoſed that his manners were polite, and his converſation pleaſing.

He ſeems not to have taken much pleaſure in writing, as he contributed nothing to the *Spectator*, and only one paper to the *Tatler*, though publiſhed by men with whom he might be ſuppoſed willing

ing to aſſociate; and though he lived many years after the publication of his Miſcellaneous Poems, yet he added nothing to them, but lived on in literary indolence; engaged in no controverſy, contending with no rival, neither ſoliciting flattery by publick commendations, nor provoking enmity by malignant criticiſm, but paſſing his time among the great and ſplendid, in the placid enjoyment of his fame and fortune.

Having owed his fortune to Halifax, he continued always of his patron's party, but, as it ſeems, without violence or acrimony; and his firmneſs was naturally eſteemed, as his abilities were reverenced. His ſecurity therefore was

never violated; and when, upon the extruſion of the Whigs, ſome interceſſion was uſed leſt Congreve ſhould be diſplaced, the earl of Oxford made this anſwer:

Non obtuſa adeo geſtamus pectora Pœni,
Nec tam averſus equos Tyriâ ſol jungit ab urbe.

He that was thus honoured by the adverſe party, might naturally expect to be advanced when his friends returned to power, and he was made ſecretary for the iſland of Jamaica; a place, I ſuppoſe, without truſt or care, but which, with his poſt in the cuſtoms, is ſaid to have afforded him twelve hundred pounds a year.

His honours were yet far greater than his profits. Every writer mentioned him with

with reſpect; and, among other teſtimonies to his merit, Steele made him the patron of his Miſcellany, and Pope inſcribed to him his tranſlation of the Iliad.

But he treated the Muſes with ingratitude; for having long converſed familiarly with the great, he wiſhed to be conſidered rather as a man of faſhion than of wit; and when he received a viſit from Voltaire, diſguſted him by the deſpicable foppery of deſiring to be conſidered not as an author but a gentleman; to which the Frenchman replied, "that, if he had been only a gentleman, "he ſhould not have come to viſit "him."

In his retirement he may be ſuppoſed to have applied himſelf to books; for he diſcovers more literature than the poets have commonly attained. But his ſtudies were in his latter days obſtructed by cataracts in his eyes, which at laſt terminated in blindneſs. This melancholy ſtate was aggravated by the gout, for which he ſought relief by a journey to Bath; but being overturned in his chariot, complained from that time of a pain in his ſide, and died at his houſe in Surrey-ſtreet in the Strand Jan. 29, 1728-9. Having lain in ſtate in the Jeruſalem-chamber, he was buried in Weſtminſter-abbey, where a monument is erected to his memory by Henrietta dutcheſs of Marlborough, to whom, for rea-

reaſons either not known or not mentioned, he bequeathed a legacy of about ten thouſand pounds; the accumulation of attentive parcimony, which, though to her ſuperfluous and uſeleſs, might have given great aſſiſtance to the ancient family from which he deſcended, at that time by the imprudence of his relation reduced to difficulties and diſtreſs.

Congreve has merit of the higheſt kind; he is an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot, nor the manner of his dialogue. Of his plays I cannot ſpeak diſtinctly; for ſince I inſpected them many years have paſſed; but what remains upon my memory is, that his characters are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very

little of nature, and not much of life. He formed a peculiar idea of comick excellence, which he ſuppoſed to conſiſt in gay remarks and unexpected anſwers; but that which he endeavoured, he ſeldom failed of performing. His ſcenes exhibit not much of humour, imagery, or paſſion: his perſonages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every ſentence is to ward or ſtrike; the conteſt of ſmartneſs is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor playing to and fro with alternate coruſcations. His comedies have therefore, in ſome degree, the operation of tragedies; they ſurpriſe rather than divert, and raiſe admiration oftener than merriment. But they are the works of

 a mind

a mind replete with images, and quick in combination.

Of his miſcellaneous poetry, which this collection has admitted, I cannot ſay any thing very favourable. The powers of Congreve ſeem to deſert him when he leaves the ſtage, as Antæus was no longer ſtrong than he could touch the ground. It cannot be obſerved without wonder, that a mind ſo vigorous and fertile in dramatick compoſitions ſhould on any other occaſion diſcover nothing but impotence and poverty. He has in theſe little pieces neither elevation of fancy, ſelection of language, nor ſkill in verſification: yet if I were required to ſelect from the whole maſs of Engliſh poetry the moſt poetical paragraph, I know not what

what I could prefer to an exclamation in *The Mourning Bride:*

ALMERIA.

It was a fancy'd noiſe; for all is huſh'd.

LEONORA.

It bore the accent of a human voice.

ALMERIA.

It was thy fear, or elſe ſome tranſient wind
Whiſtling thro' hollows of this vaulted iſle:
We'll liſten—

LEONORA.

Hark!

ALMERIA.

No, all is huſh'd, and ſtill as death.—'Tis dreadful!
How reverend is the face of this tall pile;
Whoſe ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and pond'rous roof,
By its own weight made ſtedfaſt and immoveable,
Looking tranquillity! It ſtrikes an awe

And

And terror on my aching ſight; the tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And ſhoot a chilneſs to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice;
Nay, quickly ſpeak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice—my own affrights me with its echoes.

He who reads thoſe lines enjoys for a moment the powers of a poet; he feels what he remembers to have felt before, but he feels it with great increaſe of ſenſibility; he recognizes a familiar image, but meets it again amplified and expanded, embelliſhed with beauty, and enlarged with majeſty.

Yet could the author, who appears here to have enjoyed the confidence of Nature, lament the death of queen Mary in lines like theſe:

The

The rocks are cleft, and new-deſcending rills
Furrow the brows of all th' impending hills.
The water-gods to floods their rivulets turn,
And each, with ſtreaming eyes, ſupplies his wanting urn.
The Fawns forſake the woods, the Nymphs the grove,
And round the plain in ſad diſtractions rove;
In prickly brakes their tender limbs they tear,
And leave on thorns their locks of golden hair.
With their ſharp nails, themſelves the Satyrs wound,
And tug their ſhaggy beards, and bite with grief the ground.
Lo Pan himſelf, beneath a blaſted oak,
Dejected lies, his pipe in pieces broke.
See Pales weeping too, in wild deſpair,
And to the piercing winds her boſom bare.
And ſee yon fading myrtle, where appears
The Queen of Love, all bath'd in flowing tears;

See how she wrings her hands, and beats her breast,
And tears her useless girdle from her waist:
Hear the sad murmurs of her sighing doves!
For grief they sigh, forgetful of their loves.

And many years after he gave no proof that time had improved his wisdom or his wit; for on the death of the marquis of Blandford this was his song:

And now the winds, which had so long been still,
Began the swelling air with sighs to fill:
The water-nymphs, who motionless remain'd,
Like images of ice, while she complain'd,
Now loos'd their streams; as when descending rains
Roll the steep torrents headlong o'er the plains.
The prone creation, who so long had gaz'd,
Charm'd with her cries, and at her griefs amaz'd,

Began

Began to roar and howl with horrid yell,
Diſmal to hear, and terrible to tell;
Nothing but groans and ſighs were heard around,
And Echo multiplied each mournful ſound.

In both theſe funeral poems, when he has *yelled* out many *ſyllables* of ſenſeleſs *dolour*, he diſmiſſes his reader with ſenſeleſs conſolation: from the grave of Paſtora riſes a light that forms a ſtar; and where Amaryllis wept for Amyntas, from every tear ſprung up a violet.

But William is his hero, and of William he will ſing;

The hovering winds on downy wings ſhall wait around,
And catch, and waft to foreign lands, the flying ſound.

It

It cannot but be proper to ſhew what they ſhall have to catch and carry:

'Twas now, when flowery lawns the proſpect made,
And flowing brooks beneath a foreſt ſhade,
A lowing heifer, lovelieſt of the herd,
Stood feeding by; while two fierce bulls prepar'd
Their armed heads for fight; by fate of war to prove
The victor worthy of the fair-one's love.
Unthought preſage of what met next my view;
For ſoon the ſhady ſcene withdrew.
And now, for woods, and fields, and ſpringing flowers,
Behold a town ariſe, bulwark'd with walls and lofty towers;
Two rival armies all the plain o'erſpread,
Each in battalia rang'd, and ſhining arms array'd;

With eager eyes beholding both from far,
Namur, the prize and miſtreſs of the war.

The *Birth of the Muſe* is a miſerable fiction. One good line it has, which was borrowed from Dryden. The concluding verſes are theſe:

This ſaid, no more remain'd. Th' ethereal hoſt
Again impatient crowd the cryſtal coaſt.
The father, now, within his ſpacious hands,
Encompaſs'd all the mingled maſs of ſeas and lands;
And, having heav'd aloft the ponderous ſphere,
He launch'd the world to float in ambient air.

Of his irregular poems, that to Mrs. Arabella Hunt ſeems to be the beſt: his ode for Cecilia's Day, however, has ſome lines which Pope had in his mind when he wrote his own.

His

His Imitations of Horace are feebly paraphraſtical, and the additions which he makes are of little value. He ſometimes retains what were more properly omitted, as when he talks of *vervain* and *gums* to propitiate Venus.

Of his Tranſlations the ſatire of Juvenal was written very early, and may therefore be forgiven, though it have not the maſſyneſs and vigour of the original. In all his verſions ſtrength and ſprightlineſs are wanting: his hymn to Venus, from Homer, is perhaps the beſt. His lines are weakened with expletives, and his rhymes are frequently imperfect.

His petty poems are ſeldom worth the coſt of criticiſm: ſometimes the thoughts are falſe, and ſometimes common. In his verſes on lady Gethin, the latter part is an imitation of Dryden's ode on Mrs. Killigrew; and Doris, that has been ſo laviſhly flattered by Steele, has indeed ſome lively ſtanzas, but the expreſſion might be mended; and the moſt ſtriking part of the character had been already ſhewn in *Love for Love*. His *Art of Pleaſing* is founded on a vulgar but perhaps impracticable principle, and the ſtaleneſs of the ſenſe is not concealed by any novelty of illuſtration or elegance of diction.

This

This tiſſue of poetry, from which he ſeems to have hoped a laſting name, is totally neglected, and known only as it is appended to his plays.

While comedy or while tragedy is regarded, his plays are likely to be read; but, except what relates to the ſtage, I know not that he has ever written a ſtanza that is ſung, or a couplet that is quoted. The general character of his Miſcellanies is, that they ſhew little wit, and little virtue.

Yet to him it muſt be confeſſed that we are indebted for the correction of a national error, and the cure of our Pindarick madneſs. He firſt taught the Engliſh writers that Pindar's odes were regular; and though certainly he

had not the fire requiſite for the higher ſpecies of lyrick poetry, he has ſhewn us that enthuſiaſm has its rules, and that in mere confuſion there is neither grace nor greatneſs.

4 AP 54

FENTON.

THE brevity with which I am to write the account of ELISHA FENTON is not the effect of indifference or negligence. I have ſought intelligence among his relations in his native county, but have not obtained it.

He was born near Newcaſtle in Staffordſhire, of an ancient family, whoſe eſtate was very conſiderable; but he was the youngeſt of twelve children, and being therefore neceſſarily deſtined to ſome lucrative employment, was ſent firſt

to ſchool, and afterwards to Cambridge; but, with many other wiſe and virtuous men, who at that time of diſcord and debate conſulted conſcience, whether well or ill informed, more than intereſt, he doubted the legality of the government, and, refuſing to qualify himſelf for publick employment by the oaths required, left the univerſity without a degree; but I never heard that the enthuſiaſm of oppoſition impelled him to ſeparation from the church.

By this perverſeneſs of integrity he was driven out a commoner of Nature, excluded from the regular modes of profit and proſperity, and reduced to pick up a livelihood uncertain and fortuitous; but it muſt be remembered that

that he kept his name unſullied, and never ſuffered himſelf to be reduced, like too many of the ſame ſect, to mean arts and diſhonourable ſhifts. Whoever mentioned Fenton, mentioned him with honour.

The life that paſſes in penury, muſt neceſſarily paſs in obſcurity. It is impoſſible to trace Fenton from year to year, or to diſcover what means he uſed for his ſupport. He was a while ſecretary to Charles earl of Orrery in Flanders, and tutor to his young ſon, who afterwards mentioned him with great eſteem and tenderneſs. He was at one time aſſiſtant in the ſchool of Mr. Bonwicke in Surry; and at another kept a ſchool for himſelf at Sevenoaks in

Kent, which he brought into reputation; but was perſuaded to leave it (1710) by Mr. St. John, with promiſes of a more honourable employment.

His opinions, as he was a Nonjuror, ſeem not to have been remarkably rigid. He wrote with great zeal and affection the praiſes of queen Anne, and very willingly and liberally extolled the duke of Marlborough, when he was (1707) at the height of his glory.

He expreſſed ſtill more attention to Marlborough and his family by an elegiac Paſtoral on the marquis of Blandford, which could be prompted only by reſpect or kindneſs; for neither the duke nor dutcheſs deſired the praiſe, or liked the coſt of patronage.

The

The elegance of his poetry intitled him to the company of the wits of his time, and the amiableneſs of his manners made him loved wherever he was known. Of his friendſhip to Southerne and Pope there are laſting monuments. He publiſhed in 1707 a collection of poems.

By Pope he was once placed in a ſtation that might have been of great advantage. Craggs, when he was advanced to be ſecretary of ſtate (about 1720), feeling his own want of literature, deſired Pope to procure him an inſtructor, by whoſe help he might ſupply the deficiencies of his education. Pope recommended Fenton, in whom Craggs found all that he was ſeeking. There

was now a proſpect of eaſe and plenty; for Fenton had merit, and Craggs had generoſity: but the ſmall-pox ſuddenly put an end to the pleaſing expectation.

When Pope, after the great ſucceſs of his *Iliad*, undertook the *Odyſſey*, being, as it ſeems, weary of tranſlating, he determined to engage auxiliaries. Twelve books he took to himſelf, and twelve he diſtributed between Broome and Fenton: the books allotted to Fenton were the firſt, the fourth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth. It is obſervable that he did not take the eleventh, which he had before tranſlated into blank verſe, neither did Pope claim it, but committed it to Broome. How the two aſſociates per-

performed their parts is well known to the readers of poetry, who have never been able to diſtinguiſh their books from thoſe of Pope.

In 1723 was performed his tragedy of *Mariamne*; to which Southerne, at whoſe houſe it was written, is ſaid to have contributed ſuch hints as his theatrical experience ſupplied. When it was ſhewn to Cibber it was rejected by him, with the additional inſolence of adviſing Fenton to engage himſelf in ſome employment of honeſt labour, by which he might obtain that ſupport which he could never hope from his poetry. The play was acted at the other theatre, and the brutal petulance of Cibber was confuted, though perhaps not ſhamed, by

general applauſe. Fenton's profits are ſaid to have amounted to near a thouſand pounds, with which he diſcharged a debt contracted by his attendance at court.

Fenton ſeems to have had ſome peculiar ſyſtem of verſification. *Mariamne* is written in lines of ten ſyllables, with few of thoſe redundant terminations which the drama not only admits but requires, as more nearly approaching to real dialogue. The tenor of his verſe is ſo uniform that it cannot be thought caſual, and yet upon what principle he ſo conſtructed it, is difficult to diſcover.

The mention of his play brings to my mind a very trifling occurrence: Fenton was one day in the company of Broome his aſſociate, and Ford a clergy-

man, at that time too well known, whoſe abilities, inſtead of furniſhing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and diſſolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wiſe. They determined all to ſee the *Merry Wives of Windſor*, which was acted that night; and Fenton, as a dramatick poet, took them to the ſtage-door; where the door-keeper enquiring who they were, was told that they were three very neceſſary men, Ford, Broome, and Fenton. The name in the play, which Pope reſtored to *Brook*, was then *Broome*.

It was perhaps after his play that he undertook to reviſe the punctuation of Milton's Poems, which, as the author neither wrote the original copy nor cor-

rected

rected the preſs, was ſuppoſed capable of amendment. To this edition he prefixed a ſhort and elegant account of Milton's life, written at once with tenderneſs and integrity.

He publiſhed likewiſe (1729) a very ſplendid edition of Waller, with notes often uſeful, often entertaining, but too much extended by long quotations from Clarendon. Illuſtrations drawn from a book ſo eaſily conſulted ſhould be made by reference rather than tranſcription.

The latter part of his life was calm and pleaſant. The relict of Sir William Trumbal invited him, by Pope's recommendation, to educate her ſon; whom he firſt inſtructed at home, and then attended to Cambridge. The lady afterwards

detained

detained him with her as the auditor of her accounts. He often wandered to London, and amuſed himſelf with the converſation of his friends.

He died in 1730, at Eaſthampſtead in Berkſhire, the ſeat of the lady Trumball; and Pope, who had been always his friend, honoured him with an epitaph, of which he borrowed the two firſt lines from Craſhaw.

Fenton was tall and bulky, inclined to corpulence, which he did not leſſen by much exerciſe; for he was very ſluggiſh and ſedentary, roſe late, and when he had riſen, ſat down to his book or papers. A woman, that once waited on him in a lodging, told him, as ſhe ſaid, that he would *lie a-bed, and be fed with a ſpoon.*

a ſpoon. This, however, was not the worſt that might have been prognoſticated; for Pope ſays, in his Letters, that *he died of indolence*; but his immediate diſtemper was the gout.

Of his morals and his converſation the account is uniform: he was never named but with praiſe and fondneſs, as a man in the higheſt degree amiable and excellent. Such was the character given him by the earl of Orrery, his pupil; ſuch is the teſtimony of * Pope, and ſuch were the ſuffrages of all who could boaſt of his acquaintance.

By a former writer of his Life a ſtory is told, which ought not to be forgotten. He uſed, in the latter part of his time,

* Spence.

to

to pay his relations in the country an yearly viſit. An an entertainment made for the family by his elder brother, he obſerved that one of his ſiſters, who had married unfortunately, was abſent; and found, upon enquiry, that diſtreſs had made her thought unworthy of invitation. As ſhe was at no great diſtance, he refuſed to ſit at the table till ſhe was called, and, when ſhe had taken her place, was careful to ſhew her particular attention.

His collection of poems is now to be conſidered. The ode to the *Sun* is written upon a common plan, without uncommon ſentiments; but its greateſt fault is its length. No poem ſhould be long of which the purpoſe is only to

ſtrike

ſtrike the fancy, without enlightening the underſtanding by precept, ratiocination, or narrative. A blaze firſt pleaſes, and then tires the ſight.

Of *Florelio* it is ſufficient to ſay that it is an occaſional paſtoral, which implies ſomething neither natural nor artificial, neither comick nor ſerious.

The next ode is irregular, and therefore defective. As the ſentiments are pious, they cannot eaſily be new; for what can be added to topicks on which ſucceſſive ages have been employed!

Of the *Paraphraſe on Iſaiah* nothing very favourable can be ſaid. Sublime and ſolemn proſe gains little by a change to blank verſe; and the paraphraſt has deſerted his original, by admitting

images not Aſiatick, at leaſt not Judaical:

—— Returning Peace,
Dove-eyed, and rob'd in white——

Of his petty poems ſome are very trifling, without any thing to be praiſed either in the thought or expreſſion. He is unlucky in his competitions; he tells the ſame idle tale with Congreve, and does not tell it ſo well. He tranſlates from Ovid the ſame epiſtle as Pope; but I am afraid not with equal happineſs.

To examine his performances one by one would be tedious. His tranſlation from Homer into blank verſe will find few readers while another can be had in rhyme. The piece addreſſed to Lambarde is no diſagreeable ſpecimen of epiſto-

epiſtolary poetry; and his ode to the lord Gower was pronounced by Pope the next ode in the Engliſh language to Dryden's Cecilia. Fenton may be juſtly ſtiled an excellent verſifyer and a good poet.

THE

THE compilers having omitted ſome pretty verſes, I have put them in here,

ON THE FIRST FIT OF THE GOUT.

WELCOME, thou friendly earneſt of four-ſcore,
Promiſe of wealth, that haſt alone the power
T' attend the rich, unenvy'd by the poor.
Thou that doſt Æſculapius deride,
And o'er his gally-pots in triumph ride;
Thou that art us'd t' attend the royal throne,
And under-prop the head that bears the crown;

Thou that doſt oft in privy council wait,
And guard from drowſy ſleep the eyes of ſtate;
Thou that upon the bench art mounted high,
And warn'ſt the judges how they tread awry;
Thou that doſt oft from pamper'd prelate's toe
Emphatically urge the pains below;
Thou that art ever half the city's grace,
And add'ſt to ſolemn noddles ſolemn pace;
Thou that art us'd to ſit on ladies knee,
To feed on jellies, and to drink cold tea;
Thou that art ne'er from velvet ſlipper free;
Whence comes this unſought honour unto me?
Whence does this mighty condeſcenſion flow?
To viſit my poor tabernacle, O—!

As Jove vouchſaf'd on Ida's top, 'tis ſaid,
At poor Philemon's cot to take a bed;
Pleas'd with the poor but hoſpitable feaſt,
Jove bid him aſk, and granted his requeſt;

So

So do thou grant (for thou'rt of race divine,
Begot on Venus by the God of Wine)
My humble ſuit!—And either give me ſtore
To entertain thee, or ne'er ſee me more.

4 AP 54

PRIOR.

MATTHEW PRIOR is one of thoſe that have burſt out from an obſcure original to great eminence. He was born July 21, 1664, according to ſome, at Winburne in Dorſetſhire, of I know not what parents; others ſay that he was the ſon of a joiner of London: he was perhaps willing enough to leave his birth unſettled, in hope, like Don Quixote, that the hiſtorian of his actions might find him ſome illuſtrious alliance *.

* The difficulty of ſettling Prior's birth-place is great. In the regiſter of his College he is

He is ſuppoſed to have fallen, by his father's death, into the hands of his uncle, a vintner near Charing-croſs, who ſent him for ſome time to Dr. Buſby at Weſtminſter; but, not intending to give him any education beyond that of the ſchool, took him, when he was well advanced in literature, to his own houſe; where the earl of Dorſet, celebrated for

called, at his admiſſion by the Preſident, *Matthew Prior* of *Winburn* in *Middleſex*; by himſelf next day *Matthew Prior* of *Dorſetſhire*, in which county, not in Middleſex, *Winborn*, or *Wimborne*, as it ſtands in the *Villare*, is found. When he ſtood candidate for his fellowſhip, five years afterwards, he was regiſtered again by himſelf as of *Middleſex*. The laſt record ought to be preferred, becauſe it was made upon oath. It is obſervable, that, as a native of *Winborne*, he is ſtiled *Filius Georgii Prior, generoſi*; not conſiſtently with the common account of the meanneſs of his birth.

patro-

patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates, reading Horace, and was ſo well pleaſed with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and coſt of his academical education.

He entered his name in St. John's College at Cambridge in 1682, in his eighteenth year; and it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed that he was diſtinguiſhed among his contemporaries. He became a Bachelor, as is uſual, in four years; and two years afterwards wrote the poem on the *Deity*, which ſtands firſt in his volume.

It is the eſtabliſhed practice of that College to ſend every year to the earl of Exeter ſome poems upon ſacred ſubjects, in acknowledgement of a bene-

faction enjoyed by them from the bounty of his anceſtor. On this occaſion were thoſe verſes written, which, though nothing is ſaid of their ſucceſs, ſeem to have recommended him to ſome notice; for his praiſe of the counteſs's muſick, and his lines on the famous picture of Seneca, afford reaſon for imagining that he was more or leſs converſant with that family.

The ſame year he publiſhed the *City Mouſe and Country Mouſe*, to ridicule Dryden's *Hind and Panther*, in conjunction with Mr. Montague. There is a ſtory * of great pain ſuffered, and of tears ſhed, on this occaſion, by Dryden, who thought it hard that *an old man*

* Spence.

ſhould

ſhould be ſo treated by thoſe to whom he had always been civil. By tales like theſe is the envy raiſed by ſuperior abilities every day gratified: when they are attacked, every one hopes to ſee them humbled; what is hoped is readily believed, and what is believed is confidently told. Dryden had been more accuſtomed to hoſtilities, than that ſuch enemies ſhould break his quiet; and if we can ſuppoſe him vexed, it would be hard to deny him ſenſe enough to conceal his uneaſineſs.

The *City Mouſe and Country Mouſe* procured its authors more ſolid advantages than the pleaſure of fretting Dryden; for they were both ſpeedily preferred. Montague indeed obtained the

firſt notice, with ſome degree of diſcontent, as it ſeems, in Prior, who probably knew that his own part of the performance was the beſt. He had not, however, much reaſon to complain; for he came to London, and obtained ſuch notice, that (in 1691) he was ſent to the congreſs at the Hague as ſecretary to the embaſſy. In this aſſembly of princes and nobles, to which Europe has perhaps ſcarcely ſeen any thing equal, was formed the grand alliance againſt Lewis; which at laſt did not produce effects proportionate to the magnificence of the tranſaction.

The conduct of Prior, in this ſplendid initiation into publick buſineſs, was ſo pleaſing to king William, that he made

him

him one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber; and he is ſuppoſed to have paſſed ſome of the next years in the cultivation of literature and poetry.

The death of queen Mary (in 1695) produced a ſubject for all the writers: perhaps no funeral was ever ſo poetically attended. Dryden, indeed, as a man diſcountenanced and deprived, was ſilent; but ſcarcely any other maker of verſes omitted to bring his tribute of tuneful ſorrow. An emulation of elegy was univerſal. Maria's praiſe was not confined to the Engliſh language, but fills a great part of the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*.

Prior, who was both a poet and a courtier, was not likely to miſs this opportunity of reſpect. He wrote a long

ode, which was preſented to the king, by whom it was not likely to be ever read.

In two years he was ſecretary to another embaſſy at the treaty of Ryſwick (in 1697); and next year had the ſame office at the court of France, where he is ſaid to have been conſidered with great diſtinction.

As he was one day ſurveying the apartments at Verſailles, being ſhewn the Victories of Lewis, painted by Le Brun, and aſked whether the king of England's palace had any ſuch decorations; *The monuments of my Maſter's actions*, ſaid he, *are to be ſeen every-where but in his own houſe.* The pictures of Le Brun are not only in themſelves ſuf-

ficiently oſtentatious, but were explained by inſcriptions ſo arrogant, that Boileau and Racine thought it neceſſary to make them more ſimple.

He was in the following year at Loo with the king; from whom, after a long audience, he carried orders to England, and upon his arrival became under-ſecretary of ſtate in the earl of Jerſey's office; a poſt which he did not retain long, becauſe Jerſey was removed; but he was ſoon made commiſſioner of Trade.

This year (1700) produced one of his longeſt and moſt ſplendid compoſitions, the *Carmen Seculare*, in which he exhauſts all his powers of celebration. I mean not to accuſe him of flattery; he

he probably thought all that he writ, and retained as much veracity as can be properly exacted from a poet profeſſedly encomiaſtick. King William ſupplied copious materials for either verſe or proſe. His whole life had been action, and no man ever denied him the reſplendent qualities of ſteady reſolution and perſonal courage. He was really in Prior's mind what he repreſents him in his verſes; he conſidered him as a hero, and was accuſtomed to ſay, that he praiſed others in compliance with the faſhion, but that in celebrating king William he followed his inclination. To Prior gratitude would dictate praiſe, which reaſon would not refuſe.

Among

Among the advantages to ariſe from the future years of William's reign, he mentions *Societies for uſeful Arts*, and among them

Some that with care true eloquence ſhall teach,
And to juſt idioms fix our doubtful ſpeech;
That from our writers diſtant realms may know
The thanks we to our monarch owe,
And ſchools profeſs our tongue through every land,
That has invok'd his aid, or bleſs'd his hand.

Tickell, in his *Proſpect of Peace*, has the ſame hope of a new academy:

In

In happy chains our daring language bound,
Shall ſport no more in arbitrary ſound.

Whether the ſimilitude of thoſe paſſages which exhibit the ſame thought on the ſame occaſion proceeded from accident or imitation, is not eaſy to determine. Tickell might have been impreſſed with his expectation by Swift's *Propoſal for aſcertaining the Engliſh Language*, then lately publiſhed.

In the parliament that met in 1701, he was choſen repreſentative of Eaſt Grinſtead. Perhaps it was about this time that he changed his party; for he voted for the impeachment of thoſe lords who had perſuaded the king to the Partition-

tition-treaty, a treaty in which he had himſelf been miniſterially employed.

A great part of queen Anne's reign was a time of war, in which there was little employment for negotiators, and Prior had therefore leiſure to make or to poliſh verſes. When the battle of Blenheim called forth all the verſe-men, Prior, among the reſt, took care to ſhew his delight in the increaſing honour of his country by an Epiſtle to Boileau.

He publiſhed ſoon afterwards a volume of poems, with the encomiaſtick character of his deceaſed patron the duke of Dorſet: it began with the College Exerciſe, and ended with the *Nut-brown Maid*.

The

The battle of Ramillies ſoon afterwards (in 1706) excited him to another effort of poetry. On this occaſion he had fewer or leſs formidable rivals; and it would be not eaſy to name any other compoſition produced by that event which is now remembered.

Every thing has its day. Through the reigns of William and Anne no proſperous event paſſed undignified by poetry. In the laſt war, when France was diſgraced and overpowered in every quarter of the globe, when Spain coming to her aſſiſtance only ſhared her calamities, and the name of an Engliſhman was reverenced through Europe, no poet was heard amidſt the general acclamation; the

the fame of our counſellors and heroes was intruſted to the Gazetteer.

The nation in time grew weary of the war, and the queen grew weary of her miniſters. The war was burdenſome, and the miniſters were inſolent. Harley and his friends began to hope that they might, by driving the Whigs from court and from power, gratify at once the queen and the people. There was now a call for writers, who might convey intelligence of paſt abuſes, and ſhew the waſte of publick money, the unreaſonable *Conduct of the Allies*, the avarice of generals, the tyranny of minions, and the general danger of approaching ruin.

For

For this purpoſe a paper called the *Examiner* was periodically publiſhed, written, as it happened, by any wit of the party, and ſometimes as is ſaid by Mrs. Manley. Some are owned by Swift; and one, in ridicule of Garth's verſes to Godolphin upon the loſs of his place, was written by Prior, and anſwered by Addiſon, who appears to have known the author either by conjecture or intelligence.

The Tories, who were now in power, were in haſte to end the war; and Prior, being recalled (1710) to his former employment of making treaties, was ſent (July 1711) privately to Paris with propoſitions of peace. He was remembered at the French court; and returning

ing in about a month brought with him M. Meſnager, a miniſter from France, inveſted with full powers, and the Abbé Gaultier.

This tranſaction not being avowed, Macky, the maſter of the Dover packet-boat, either zealouſly or officiouſly, ſeized Prior and his aſſociates at Canterbury. It is eaſily ſuppoſed that they were ſoon releaſed.

The negotiation was begun at Prior's houſe, where the Queen's miniſters met Meſnager (September 20, 1711), and entered privately upon the great buſineſs. The importance of Prior appears from the mention made of him by St. John in his Letter to the Queen.

"My Lord Treaſurer moved, and all "my Lords were of the ſame opinion, "that Mr. Prior ſhould be added to "thoſe who are impowered to ſign; the "reaſon for which is, becauſe he, having "perſonally treated with Monſieur de "Torcy, is the beſt witneſs we can pro- "duce of the ſenſe in which the general "preliminary engagements are entered "into: beſides which, as he is the beſt "verſed in matters of trade of all your "Majeſty's ſervants who have been "truſted in this ſecret, if you ſhall think "fit to employ him in the future treaty "of commerce, it will be of conſe- "quence that he has been a party con- "cerned in concluding that conven- "tion, which muſt be the rule of this "treaty."

The

The assembly of this important night was in some degree clandestine, the design of treating not being yet openly declared, and, when the Whigs returned to power, was aggravated to a charge of high treason; though, as Prior remarks in his imperfect answer to the report of the *Committee of Secrecy*, no treaty ever was made without private interviews and preliminary discussions.

My business is not the history of the peace, but the life of Prior. The conferences began at Utrecht on the first of January (1711-12), and the English plenipotentiaries arrived on the fifteenth. The ministers of the different potentates conferred and conferred; but the peace advanced so slowly, that speedier me-

thods were found neceſſary, and Bolingbroke was ſent to Paris to adjuſt differences with leſs formality; Prior either accompanied him or followed him; and after his departure had the appointments and authority of an ambaſſador, though no publick character.

By ſome miſtake of the Queen's orders, the court of France had been diſguſted; and Bolingbroke ſays in his Letter, "Dear Mat, hide the nakedneſs "of thy country, and give the beſt turn "thy fertile brain will furniſh thee with "to the blunders of thy countrymen, "who are not much better politicians "than the French are poets."

Soon after the duke of Shrewſbury went on a formal embaſſy to Paris. It is related

related by Boyer, that the intention was to have joined Prior in the ſame commiſſion, but that Shrewſbury refuſed to be aſſociated with a man ſo meanly born. Prior therefore continued to act without a title till the duke returned next year to England, and then he aſſumed the ſtile and dignity of embaſſador.

But, while he continued in appearance a private man, he was treated with confidence by Lewis, who ſent him with a letter to the Queen, written in favour of the elector of Bavaria. "I ſhall expect," ſays he, "with impatience, "the return of Mr. Prior, whoſe conduct is very agreeable to me." And while the duke of Shrewſbury was ſtill at Paris, Bolingbroke wrote to Prior

thus: "Monſieur de Torcy has a con-
"fidence in you; make uſe of it, once
"for all, upon this occaſion, and con-
"vince him thoroughly, that we muſt
"give a different turn to our parliament
"and our people, according to their re-
"ſolution at this criſis."

Prior's publick dignity and ſplendour commenced in Auguſt 1713, and continued till the Auguſt following; but I am afraid that, according to the uſual fate of greatneſs, it was attended with ſome perplexities and mortifications. He had not all that is cuſtomarily given to ambaſſadors: he hints to the queen, in an imperfect poem, that he had no ſervice of plate; and it appeared, by the debts which

which he contracted, that his remittances were not punctually made.

On the first of August 1714, ensued the downfal of the Tories and the degradation of Prior. He was recalled; but was not able to return, being detained by the debts which he had found it necessary to contract, and which were not discharged before March, though his old friend Montague was now at the head of the treasury.

He returned then as soon as he could, and was welcomed on the 25th of March by a warrant, but was, however, suffered to live in his own house, under the custody of the messenger, till he was examined before a committee of the Privy Council, of which Mr. Walpole

was chairman, and lord Coningſby, Mr. Stanhope, and Mr. Lechmere, were the principal interrogators; who, in this examination, of which there is printed an account not unentertaining, behaved with the boiſterouſneſs of men elated by recent authority. They are repreſented as aſking queſtions ſometimes vague, ſometimes inſidious, and writing anſwers different from thoſe which they received. Prior, however, ſeems to have been overpowered by their turbulence; for he confeſſes that he ſigned what, if he had ever come before a legal judicature, he ſhould have contradicted, or explained away. The oath was adminiſtered by Boſcawen, a Middleſex juſtice, who, at laſt was going to write his

his atteſtation on the wrong ſide of the paper.

They were very induſtrious to find ſome charge againſt Oxford, and aſked Prior, with great earneſtneſs, who was preſent when the preliminary articles were talked of or ſigned at his houſe. He told them, that either the earl of Oxford or the duke of Shrewſbury was abſent, but he could not remember which; an anſwer which perplexed them, becauſe it ſupplied no accuſation againſt either. "Could any thing be more ab-"ſurd," ſays he, "or more inhuman, "than to propoſe to me a queſtion, by "the anſwering of which I might, ac-"cording to them, prove myſelf a tray-"tor? And notwithſtanding their ſo-

"lemn

"lemn promiſe, that nothing which I "could ſay ſhould hurt myſelf, I had "no reaſon to truſt them; for they vio- "lated that promiſe about five hours "after. However, I owned I was there "preſent. Whether this was wiſely done "or no, I leave to my friends to deter- "mine."

When he had ſigned the paper, he was told by Walpole, that the committee were not ſatisfied with his behaviour, nor could give ſuch an account of it to the Commons as might merit favour; and that they now thought a ſtricter confinement neceſſary than to his own houſe. "Here," ſays he, "Boſcawen played "the moraliſt, and Coningſby the chriſ- "tian, but both very aukwardly." The

meſ-

meſſenger, in whoſe cuſtody he was to be placed, was then called, and very decently aſked by Coningſby, *if his houſe was ſecured by bars and bolts?* The meſſenger anſwered, *No*, with aſtoniſhment; at which Coningſby very angrily ſaid, *Sir, you muſt ſecure this priſoner; it is for the ſafety of the nation: if he eſcape, you ſhall anſwer for it.*

They had already printed their report; and in this examination were endeavouring to find proofs.

He continued thus confined for ſome time; and Mr. Walpole (June 10, 1715) moved for an impeachment againſt him. What made him ſo acrimonious does not appear: he was by nature no thirſter for blood. Prior was a week after committed

mitted to close custody, with orders that *no person should be admitted to see him, without leave from the Speaker.*

When, two years after, an Act of Grace was past, he was excepted, and continued still in custody, which he had made less tedious by writing his *Alma*. He was, however, soon after discharged.

He had now his liberty, but he had nothing else. Whatever the profit of his employments might have been, he had always spent it; and at the age of fifty-three was, with all his abilities, in danger of penury, having yet no solid revenue but from the fellowship of his college, which, when in his exaltation he was censured for retaining it, he said, he could live upon at last.

Being

Being however generally known and eſteemed, he was encouraged to add other poems to thoſe which he had printed, and publiſh them by ſubſcription. The expedient ſucceeded by the induſtry of many friends, who circulated the propoſals*, and the care of ſome, who, it is ſaid, withheld the money from him, leſt he ſhould ſquander it. The price of the volume was two guineas; the whole collection was four thouſand; to which lord Harley, the ſon of the earl of Oxford, to whom he had invariably adhered, added an equal ſum for the purchaſe of Downhall, which Prior was to enjoy during life, and Harley after his deceaſe.

He had now, what wits and philoſophers have often wiſhed, the power of

* Swift obtained *many* ſubſcriptions for him in Ireland.

paſſing

passing the day in contemplative tranquillity. But it seems that busy men seldom live long in a state of quiet. It is not unlikely that his health declined. He complains of deafness; *for*, says he, *I took little care of my ears while I was not sure if my head was my own.*

Of any occurrences in his remaining life I have found no account. In a letter to Swift, "I have," says he, "treated "lady Harriot at Cambridge. A Fellow "of a College treat! and spoke verses "to her in a gown and cap! What, the "plenipotentiary, so far concerned in the "damned peace at Utrecht! the man "that makes up half the volume of "terse prose, that makes up the report "of the committee, speaking verses! "*Sic est, homo sum.*"

He died at *Wimpole*, a ſeat of the earl of Oxford, on the eighteenth of September 1721, and was buried in Weſtminſter; where on a monument, for which, as the *laſt piece of human vanity*, he left five hundred pounds, is engraven this epitaph:

Sui Temporis Hiſtoriam meditanti,
Paulatim obrepens Febris
Operi ſimul & Vitæ filum abrupit,
Sept. 18. An. Dom. 1721. Ætat. 57.
H. S. E.
Vir Eximius
Sereniſſimis
Regi GULIELMO Reginæque MARIÆ
In Congreſſione Fœderatorum
Hagæ anno 1690 celebrata,
Deinde Magnæ Britanniæ Legatis
Tum iis,

Qui

Qui anno 1697 Pacem RYSWICKI confecerunt,

Tum iis,

Qui apud Gallos annis proximis Legationem obierunt;

Eodem etiam anno 1697 in Hiberniæ

SECRETARIUS;

Nec non in utroque Honorabili conſeſſu

Eorum,

Qui anno 1700 ordinandis Commercii negotiis

Quique anno 1711 dirigendis Portorii rebus

Præſidebant,

COMMISSIONARIUS;

Poſtremò

Ab ANNA

Feliciſſimæ memoriæ Reginâ

Ad LUDOVICUM XIV. Galliæ Regem

Miſſus anno 1711.

De Pace ſtabilienda,

(Pace etiamnum durante

Diuque ut boni jam omnes ſperant duratura)

Cum ſumma poteſtate Legatus.

MAT-

MATTHÆUS PRIOR Armiger;
Qui
Hos omnes, quibus cumulatus eſt, Titulos
Humanitatis, Ingenii Eruditionis Laude
Superavit;
Cui enim naſcenti faciles arriſerant Muſæ.
Hunc Puerum Schola hic Regia perpolivit;
Juvenem in Collegio Sti. Johannis
Cantabrigia optimis Scientiis inſtruxit;
Virum denique auxit & perfecit
Multa cum viris Principibus conſuetudo;
Ita natus, ita inſtitutus,
A Vatum Choro avelli nunquam potuit,
Sed ſolebat ſæpe rerum Civilium gravitatem
Amœniorum Literarum Studiis condire:
Et cum omne adeo Poetices genus
Haud infeliciter tentaret,
Tum in Fabellis concinne lepideque texendis
Mirus Artifex
Neminem habuit parem.

Hæc liberalis animi oblectamenta;
Quam nullo Illi labore conſtiterint,
Facile ii perſpexere, quibus uſus eſt Amici;
Apud quos Urbanitatum & Leporum plenus
Cum ad rem, quæcunque forte inciderat,
Apte variè copioſeque alluderet,
Interea nihil quæſitum, nihil vi expreſſum
Videbatur,
Sed omnia ultro effluere,
Et quaſi jugi è fonte affatim exuberare
Ita Suos tandem dubios reliquit,
Eſſetne in Scriptis, Poeta Elegantior,
An in Convictu, Comes Jucundior.

Of Prior, eminent as he was, both by his abilities and ſtation, very few memorials have been left by his contemporaries; the account therefore muſt now be deſtitute of his private character and familiar

miliar practices. He lived at a time when the rage of party detected all which it was any man's intereſt to hide; and as little ill is heard of Prior, it is certain that not much was known. He was not afraid of provoking cenſure; for when he forſook the Whigs*, under whoſe patronage he firſt entered the world, he became a Tory ſo ardent and determinate, that he did not willingly conſort with men of different opinions. He was one of the ſixteen Tories who met weekly, and agreed to addreſs each other by the title of *Brother*; and ſeems to have adhered, not only by concurrence of political deſigns, but by pecu-

* Spence.

liar affection, to the earl of Oxford and his family. With how much confidence he was truſted, has been already told.

He was however, in Pope's * opinion, fit only to make verſes, and leſs qualified for buſineſs than Addiſon himſelf. This was ſurely ſaid without conſideration. Addiſon, exalted to a high place, was forced into degradation by the ſenſe of his own incapacity; Prior, who was employed by men very capable of eſtimating his value, having been ſecretary to one embaſſy, had, when great abilities were again wanted, the ſame office another time; and was, after ſo much experience of his knowledge and

* Spence.

dex-

dexterity, at laſt ſent to tranſact a negotiation in the higheſt degree arduous and important; for which he was qualified, among other requiſites, in the opinion of Bolingbroke, by his influence upon the French miniſter, and by ſkill in queſtions of commerce above other men.

Of his behaviour in the lighter parts of life, it is too late to get much intelligence. One of his anſwers to a boaſtful Frenchman has been related, and to an impertinent he made another equally proper. During his embaſſy, he ſat at the opera by a man, who, in his rapture, accompanied with his own voice the principal ſinger. Prior fell to railing at the performer with all the terms

of reproach that he could collect, till the Frenchman, ceasing from his song, began to expostulate with him for his harsh censure of a man who was confessedly the ornament of the stage. "I "know all that," says the ambassador, "*mais il chante si haut, que je ne scau-* "*rois vous entendre.*"

In a gay French company, where every one sung a little song or stanza, of which the burden was, *Banniſſons la Melancholie*; when it came to his turn to sing, after the performance of a young lady that sat next him, he produced these extemporary lines:

Mais celle voix, et ces beaux yeux,
Font Cupidon trop dangereux,
Et je suis triste quand je crie
Banniſſons la Melancholie.

Tradition repreſents him as willing to deſcend from the dignity of the poet and the ſtateſman to the low delights of mean company. His Chloe probably was ſometimes ideal; but the woman with whom he cohabited was a deſpicable drab * of the loweſt ſpecies. One of his wenches, perhaps Chloe, while he was abſent from his houſe, ſtole his plate, and ran away; as was related by a woman who had been his ſervant. Of this propenſity to ſordid converſe I have ſeen an account ſo ſeriouſly ridiculous, that it ſeems to deſerve inſertion.

"I have been aſſured that Prior, af-
"ter having ſpent the evening with Ox-
"ford, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift,

* Spence.

"would go and ſmoke a pipe, and "drink a bottle of ale, with a common "ſoldier and his wife, in Long-Acre, "before he went to bed; not from any "remains of the lowneſs of his origi-"nal, as one ſaid, but, I ſuppoſe, that "his faculties

"—Strain'd to the height,
"In that celeſtial colloquy ſublime,
"Dazzled and ſpent, ſunk down, and "ſought repair."

Poor Prior! why was he ſo *ſtrained*, and in ſuch *want* of *repair*, after a converſation with men not, in the opinion of the world, much wiſer than himſelf? But ſuch are the conceits of ſpeculatiſts, who *ſtrain* their *faculties* to find in a mine what lies upon the ſurface.

His opinions, ſo far as the means of judging are left us, ſeem to have been right; but his life was, it ſeems, irregular, negligent, and ſenſual.

PRIOR has written with great variety, and his variety has made him popular. He has tried all ſtiles from the groteſque to the ſolemn, and has not ſo failed in any as to incur deriſion or diſgrace.

His works may be diſtinctly conſidered as compriſing Tales, Love-verſes, Occaſional Poems, Alma, and Solomon.

His Tales have obtained general approbation, being written with great familiarity

miliarity and great ſpritelineſs: the language is eaſy, but ſeldom groſs, and the numbers ſmooth, without appearance of care. Of theſe Tales there are only four. The *Ladle*; which is introduced by a Preface, neither neceſſary nor pleaſing, neither grave nor merry. *Paulo Purganti*; which has likewiſe a Preface, but of more value than the Tale. *Hans Carvel*, not over-decent; and *Protogenes* and *Apelles*, an old ſtory, mingled, by an affectation not diſagreeable, with modern images. The *Young Gentleman in Love* has hardly a juſt claim to the title of *a Tale*. I know not whether he be the original author of any Tale which he has given us. The Adventure of *Hans Carvel* has paſt through many ſucceſ-

ſions

ſions of merry wits; for it is to be found in Arioſto's Satires, and is perhaps yet older. But the merit of ſuch ſtories is the art of telling them.

In his Amorous Effuſions he is leſs happy; for they are not dictated by nature or by paſſion, and have neither gallantry nor tenderneſs. They have the coldneſs of Cowley, without his wit, the dull exerciſes of a ſkilful verſifyer, reſolved at all adventures to write ſomething about Chloe, and trying to be amorous by dint of ſtudy. His fictions therefore are mythological. Venus, after the example of the Greek Epigram, aſks when ſhe was ſeen *naked and bathing*. Then *Cupid* is *miſtaken*; then *Cupid* is *diſarmed*; then he loſes his darts to

Gany-

Ganymede; then *Jupiter* ſends him a ſummons by *Mercury*. Then *Chloe* goes a-hunting, with an *ivory quiver graceful at her ſide*; Diana miſtakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is ſurely deſpicable; and even when he tries to act the lover, without the help of gods or goddeſſes, his thoughts are unaffecting or remote. He talks not *like a man of this world*.

The greateſt of all his amorous eſſays is *Henry* and *Emma*; a dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither eſteem for the man, nor tenderneſs for the woman. The example of Emma, who reſolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt ſhall drive him, deſerves no imitation; and the experiment

ment by which Henry tries the lady's conſtancy, is ſuch as muſt end either in infamy to her, or in diſappointment to himſelf.

His occaſional Poems neceſſarily loſt part of their value, as their occaſions, being leſs remembered, raiſed leſs emotion. Some of them, however, are preſerved by their inherent excellence. The burleſque of Boileau's Ode on Namur has, in ſome parts, ſuch airineſs and levity as will always procure it readers, even among thoſe who cannot compare it with the original. The Epiſtle to Boileau is not ſo happy. The Poems to the King are now peruſed only by young ſtudents, who read merely that they may learn to write; and of the

the *Carmen Seculare*, I cannot but ſuſpect that I might praiſe or cenſure it by caprice, without danger of detection; for who can be ſuppoſed to have laboured through it? Yet the time has been when this neglected work was ſo popular, that it was tranſlated into Latin by no common maſter.

His Poem on the Battle of Ramillies is neceſſarily tedious by the form of the ſtanza: an uniform maſs of ten lines, thirty-five times repeated, inconſequential and ſlightly connected, muſt weary both the ear and the underſtanding. His imitation of Spenſer, which conſiſts principally in *I ween* and *I weet*, without excluſion of later modes of ſpeech, makes his poem neither ancient nor modern.

dern. His mention of *Mars* and *Bellona*, and his compariſon of Marlborough to the Eagle that bears the thunder of *Jupiter*, are all puerile and unaffecting; and yet more deſpicable is the long tale told by *Lewis* in his deſpair, of *Brute* and *Troynovante*, and the teeth of *Cadmus*, with his ſimilies of the raven and eagle, and wolf and lion. By the help of ſuch eaſy fictions, and vulgar topicks, without acquaintance with life, and without knowledge of art or nature, a poem of any length, cold and lifeleſs like this, may be eaſily written on any ſubject.

In his Epilogues to *Phædra* and to *Lucius*, he is very happily facetious; but into the Prologue before the Queen, the

the pedant has found his way, with Minerva, Perſeus, and Andromeda.

His Epigrams and lighter pieces are, like thoſe of others, ſometimes elegant, ſometimes trifling, and ſometimes dull; among the beſt are the *Camelion*, and the epitaph on *John* and *Joan*.

Scarcely any one of our poets has written ſo much, and tranſlated ſo little: the verſion of Callimachus is ſufficiently licentious; the paraphraſe on St. Paul's Exhortation to Charity is eminently beautiful.

Alma is written in profeſſed imitation of Hudibras, and has at leaſt one accidental reſemblance: Hudibras wants a plan, becauſe it is left imperfect; Alma is imperfect, becauſe it ſeems never

never to have had a plan. Prior appears not to have propoſed to himſelf any drift or deſign, but to have written the caſual dictates of the preſent moment.

What Horace ſaid when he imitated Lucilius, might be ſaid of Butler by Prior, his numbers were not ſmooth or neat: Prior excelled him in verſification, but he was, like Horace, *inventore minor*; he had not Butler's exuberance of matter and variety of illuſtration. The ſpangles of wit which he could afford, he knew how to poliſh; but he wanted the bullion of his maſter. Butler pours out a negligent profuſion, certain of the weight, but careleſs of the ſtamp. Prior has comparatively little, but with

that little he makes a fine ſhew. Alma has many admirers, and was the only piece among Prior's works of which Pope ſaid that he ſhould wiſh to be the author.

Solomon is the work to which he entruſted the protection of his name, and which he expected ſucceeding ages to regard with veneration. His affection was natural; it had undoubtedly been written with great labour, and who is willing to think that he has been labouring in vain? He had infuſed into it much knowledge and much thought; had often poliſhed it to elegance, often dignified it with ſplendour, and ſometimes heightened it to ſublimity: he perceived in it many excellencies, and did not

not diſcover that it wanted that without which all others are of ſmall avail, the power of engaging attention and alluring curioſity.

Tediouſneſs is the moſt fatal of all faults; negligences or errors are ſingle and local, but tediouſneſs pervades the whole; other faults are cenſured and forgotten, but the power of tediouſneſs propagates itſelf. He that is weary the firſt hour, is more weary the ſecond; as bodies forced into motion, contrary to their tendency, paſs more and more ſlowly through every ſucceſſive interval of ſpace.

Unhappily this pernicious failure is that which an author is leaſt able to diſcover. We are ſeldom tireſome to our-

ſelves; and the act of compoſition fills and delights the mind with change of language and ſucceſſion of images; every couplet when produced is new, and novelty is the great ſource of pleaſure. Perhaps no man ever thought a line ſuperfluous when he firſt wrote it, or contracted his work till his ebullitions of invention had ſubſided. If he ſhould controul his deſire of immediate renown, and keep his work *nine years* unpubliſhed, he will be ſtill the author, and ſtill in danger of deceiving himſelf; and if he conſults his friends, he will probably find men who have more kindneſs than judgement, or more fear to offend than deſire to inſtruct.

The tediouſneſs of this poem proceeds not from the uniformity of the ſubject, for it is ſufficiently diverſified, but from the continued tenour of the narration; in which Solomon relates the ſucceſſive viciſſitudes of his own mind, without the intervention of any other ſpeaker, or the mention of any other agent, unleſs it be Abra; and the reader is only to learn what he thought, and to be told that he thought wrong. The event of every experiment is foreſeen, and therefore the proceſs is not much regarded.

Yet the work is far from deſerving to be neglected. He that ſhall peruſe it will be able to mark many paſſages, to which he may recur for inſtruction

or delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philoſopher to reaſon.

If Prior's poetry be generally conſidered, his praiſe will be that of correctneſs and induſtry, rather than of compaſs of comprehenſion, or activity of fancy. He never made any effort of invention: his greater pieces were all tiſſues of ſentiment; and his ſmaller, which conſiſt of light images or ſingle conceits, were not always his own. I have traced him among the French Epigrammatiſts, and have been informed that he poached for prey among obſcure authors. The *Thief and the Cordelier* is, I ſuppoſe, generally conſidered as an original production; with how much juſ-

tice

tice this Epigram may tell, which was written by Georgius Sabinus, a poet now little known or read, though once the friend of Luther and Melancthon:

De Sacerdote furem consolante.

Quidam sacrificus furem comitatus euntem
Huc ubi dat fontes carnificina neci.
Ne fis mœstus, ait; summi conviva Tonantis
Jam cum cœlitibus (si modo credis) eris.
Ille gemens, si vera mihi solatia præbes,
Hospes apud superos sis meus oro, refert.
Sacrificus contra; mihi non convivia fas est
Ducere, jejunans hac edo luce nihil.

What he has valuable he owes to his diligence and his judgement. His diligence has justly placed him amongst the most correct of the English poets; and

he was one of the firſt that reſolutely endeavoured at correctneſs. He never ſacrifices accuracy to haſte, nor indulges himſelf in contemptuous negligence, or impatient idleneſs; he has no careleſs lines, or entangled ſentiments; his words are nicely ſelected, and his thoughts fully expanded. If this part of his character ſuffers any abatement, it muſt be from the diſproportion of his rhymes, which have not always ſufficient conſonance, and from the admiſſion of broken lines into his *Solomon*; but perhaps he thought, like Cowley, that hemiſtichs ought to be admitted into heroick poetry.

He had apparently ſuch rectitude of judgement as ſecured him from every thing

thing that approached to the ridiculous or abſurd; but as laws operate in civil agency not to the excitement of virtue, but the repreſſion of wickedneſs, ſo judgement in the operations of intellect can hinder faults, but not produce excellence. Prior is never low, nor very often ſublime. It is ſaid by Longinus of Euripides, that he forces himſelf ſometimes into grandeur by violence of effort, as the lion kindles his fury by the laſhes of his own tail. Whatever Prior obtains above mediocrity ſeems the effort of ſtruggle and of toil. He has many vigorous but few happy lines; he has every thing by purchaſe, and nothing by gift; he had no *nightly viſi-*

tations

tations of the Muſe, no infuſions of ſentiment or felicities of fancy.

His diction, however, is more his own than that of any among the ſucceſſors of Dryden; he borrows no lucky turns, or commodious modes of language, from his predeceſſors. His phraſes are original, but they are ſometimes harſh; as he inherited no elegances, none has he bequeathed. His expreſſion has every mark of laborious ſtudy; the line ſeldom ſeems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by conſtraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it ſullenly. In his greater compoſitions there may be found

more

more rigid ſtatelineſs than graceful dignity.

Of verſification he was not negligent: what he received from Dryden he did not loſe; neither did he increaſe the difficulty of writing, by unneceſſary ſeverity, but uſes Triplets and Alexandrines without ſcruple. In his Preface to *Solomon* he propoſes ſome improvements, by extending the ſenſe from one couplet to another, with variety of pauſes. This he has attempted, but without ſucceſs; his interrupted lines are unpleaſing, and his ſenſe as leſs diſtinct is leſs ſtriking.

He has altered the Stanza of Spenſer, as a houſe is altered by building another in its place of a different form. With how little reſemblance he has formed

formed his new Stanza to that of his maſter, theſe ſpecimens will ſhew.

SPENSER.

She flying faſt from heaven's hated face,
And from the world that her diſcover'd wide,
Fled to the waſteful wilderneſs apace,
From living eyes her open ſhame to hide,
And lurk'd in rocks and caves long uneſpy'd.
But that fair crew of knights, and Una fair,
Did in that caſtle afterwards abide,
To reſt themſelves, and weary powers repair,
Where ſtore they found of all, that dainty was and rare.

PRIOR.

To the cloſe rock the frighted raven flies,
Soon as the riſing eagle cuts the air:
The ſhaggy wolf unſeen and trembling lies,
When the hoarſe roar proclaims the lion near.

Ill-

Ill-ſtarr'd did we our forts and lines forſake,
To dare our Britiſh foes to open fight:
Our conqueſt we by ſtratagem ſhould make:
Our triumph had been founded in our flight.
'Tis ours, by craft and by ſurprize to gain:
'Tis theirs, to meet in arms, and battle in the plain.

By this new ſtructure of his lines he has avoided difficulties; nor am I ſure that he has loſt any of the power of pleaſing; but he no longer imitates Spenſer.

Some of his poems are written without regularity of meaſures; for, when he commenced poet, we had not recovered from our Pindarick infatuation; but he probably lived to be convinced that

that the eſſence of verſe is order and conſonance.

His numbers are ſuch as mere diligence may attain; they ſeldom offend the ear, and ſeldom ſooth it; they commonly want airineſs, lightneſs, and facility; what is ſmooth is not ſoft. His verſes always roll, but they ſeldom flow.

A ſurvey of the life and writings of Prior may exemplify a ſentence which he doubtleſs underſtood well, when he read Horace at his uncle's; *the veſſel long retains the ſcent which it firſt receives.* In his private relaxation he revived the tavern, and in his amorous pedantry he exhibited the college. But on higher occaſions, and nobler ſubjects, when

habit was overpowered by the neceſſity of reflection, he wanted not wiſdom as a ſtateſman, nor elegance as a poet.